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Studies in the Epistle to
the Hebrews

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Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews

BY

REV. DANIEL SHEPARDSON, Ph.D. (Yale)

Author of "Sorrows Sanctified"



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DEDICATED TO
MY MOTHER ON EARTH
AND
MY FATHER IN HEAVEN,
TO WHOM I OWE A NEVER-ENDING
DEBT OF GRATITUDE

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Outline of the Epistle to the Hebrews

PART I.

ARGUMENTATIVE. CHAPS. I—X, 18.

Theme. Christianity is God's full and final revelation of Himself, **superior** to Judaism in that it was given through a **superior agent** (Chaps. I—VII), and in that it furnishes **superior advantages**. (Chaps. VIII—X, 18.)

1. Christ is **superior** to Angels. (Chaps. I, 1—II, 18.)
 - Chap. I, verses 1-4. The Gospel is God's full and final Revelation to man.
 - “ “ 5-14. Christ as Son is *superior to Angels* as shown by quotations from the Old Testament.
 - Chap. II, “ 1-4. Warning against not heeding such an One,
 - “ “ 5-18. His superiority not diminished but increased by his temporary humiliation.
2. Christ is **superior** to Moses. (Chaps. III, 1—IV, 16.)
 - Chap. III, vs. 1-6. Christ is *superior to Moses* by His very nature and office.
 - “ “ 7-19, Warning against imitating the rebellion of their fathers.

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- Chap. IV, vs. 1-10. The rest of God, forfeited by ancient Israel, still open under its higher form as God's Sabbatic rest.
- “ “ 11-16. Renewed exhortations and transition to next topic.
3. Christ is **superior** to Aaron. (Chaps. V, 1—VII, 28.)
- Chap. V, vs. 1-10. Necessary qualifications for high priest. Jesus has these qualifications.
- “ v. 11—Chap. VI, v. 20. Long hortatory passage, suggested by the incapacity of the readers to enter on the profound discussion before them, *i. e. the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ.*
- “ vs. 11-14. Rebuke for their lack of growth.
- Chap. VI, “ 1-3. Purpose of writer to push forward.
- “ “ 6-8. Awfulness of apostacy.
- “ “ 9-12. Exhortation to faith and patient endurance.
- “ “ 13-20. Promises are worthy of inheritance.
- Chap. VII, “ 1-28. *The royal Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ superior to that of Aaron; His ideal Priesthood.*
4. Christ, the ideal Priest, ministers in a *better* tabernacle, as the Mediator of a *better* covenant, and accomplishes a *better* service: the scene, conditions, and results of His ministry are ideal. (Chaps. VIII—X, 18.)

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- Chap. VIII, vs. 1-6. Christ ministers in the real tabernacle, while the Levitical priests minister in that which is only a shadow of an eternal reality.
- “ “ 7-13. Christ the Mediator of the new covenant, superior to the old which is about to pass away.
- Chap. IX, “ 1-10. The outer and inner tabernacles and the service in each under the old covenant.
- “ “ 11-14. Christ's superior service in the real tabernacle, which He accomplishes by offering Himself.
- “ “ 15-28. The high-priestly work of Christ manifests a new Covenant, and a true Tabernacle consecrated by the blood of a *better* sacrifice and *entered once for all*.
5. Summary of the entire high-priestly argument, (Chap. X, 1-18.)
- Chap. X, vs. 1-10. Finality of Christ's voluntary *sacrifice*, as opposed to *symbolic* sacrifices of the law.
- “ “ 11-14. Finality of Christ's priestly ministration, as compared with the *oft-repeated* ministrations of the Levitical priesthood.
- “ “ 15-18. Finality of the *New Covenant* and of the sacrifice which brings absolute remission of sins.

PART II.

HORTATORY. CHAPS. X, 19—XIII, 25.

Chap. X,	vs. 19-25.	Exhortation to Christian Confidence and Fellowship.
"	" 26-31.	Solemn warning against Apostacy.
"	" 32-39.	Words of Comfort and Appeal.
Chap. XI,	" 1-40.	The Triumphs of Faith.
Chap. XII,	" 1-13.	Exhortations to patient endurance
"	" 14-17.	Exhortations to brotherly love, holiness and watchfulness.
"	" 18-24.	Appeal based upon the superiority of the New Covenant.
"	" 25-29.	The guilt and peril of Apostacy.
Chap. XIII,	" 1-9.	Concluding admonitions.
"	" 10-16.	Renewed exhortation against Apostacy.
"	" 17-25.	Concluding exhortations, salutation and benediction.

Helps to the Study of Hebrews

THE very best English translation obtainable is the first necessity of the general student of the Bible. No one, who desires to get as near as possible to the exact thought of the Scriptures but is unable to read Hebrew or Greek, should be content to use a poor or even a good translation of the Bible, if a *better* translation lies within the realm of his possibilities. *Get, then, the very best version of the Scriptures* for your own daily use. The best translation now before the public is "*The American Revised Version with References*," which is an improvement upon the English Revised Version in that it incorporates in the text "the readings preferred by the American Revision Companies," which readings and renderings were put in the back part and on the margins of the English Revision. Also the "Copyright Marginal References" of this edition are very full and fine. If one reads Greek, the best commentary upon the Epistle to the Hebrews is that of Dr. B. Foss Westcott. Prof. A. B. Bruce, all of whose writings upon the New Testament are so fresh and helpful, has an exegetical study upon the Epistle

to the Hebrews, which Epistle he designates as "The First Apology for Christianity." Dr. R. W. Dale, who has reached and helped so many by his various writings, has done all students of Hebrews a service in "The Jewish Temple and the Christian Church, a Series of Discourses on the Epistle to the Hebrews." One of the best of F. B. Meyer's devotional writings is "The Way into the Holiest: Expositions of Hebrews." The treatment of Hebrews by F. W. Farrar in "The Cambridge Bible Series for Schools and Colleges" is also helpful. All of these books are recommended, and in the order named, to those who would make for themselves a more detailed examination of Hebrews than is given in these outline studies. To all of the above-named books the writer is more or less indebted, as will be manifest in the pages following, and he hereby gladly acknowledges his gratitude for them and to their authors.

The Bible, Whence and What?



BEFORE we enter upon our proposed course of Studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews it will be found profitable to spend our first hour together in examining *certain general questions about the Bible as a whole, questions about its origin, purpose and character.* The subject of this first study may be stated as, "The Bible, Whence and What?" or, "The Nature and Method of Revelation"; which theme we shall consider from the human point of view. At another time we shall study *the fact* of Revelation, and think upon the reasons why we may rationally believe the Bible to be the book of God;¹ but here we are to consider the *method* of Revelation, and attempt to answer the question, "Where did we get the book that we call the Bible?"

The Bible, like Christ, is both human and divine; it has had a natural as well as a supernatural history; it is *a message from God to men through men.* No study of the Person and work

¹ For this study see my "Sorrows Sanctified," 3d edition, p. 113.

of Christ would be satisfactory or complete which considered Him as divine only; He was a Man as well as God; He had a natural history as well as a supernatural history; His humanity was no less real than His divinity, His divinity was no less true than His humanity; He was both Man and God, God and Man, the God-Man Christ Jesus. So the Bible is both human and divine. There is in it a natural element; there is in it a supernatural element; both the natural and the supernatural elements are real and genuine, and in any complete and satisfactory study of the Bible both elements should be constantly borne in mind: as we read in 2 Peter 1: 21, "Men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." "Men spake"; and they "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." The Bible makes no such fabulous claims for itself as are made for many of the so-called sacred books and things of the world's religious history. The Bible makes no pretension to have fallen in a miraculous way from the heights of heaven, as was supposed to be true of the wonderful statue of Diana of the Ephesians; nor does it profess to have been written in some far-off celestial sphere in mysterious characters as a catechism of doctrine, and hidden somewhere upon earth by angelic hands, to be discovered through dream or vision by the hands of man; as was claimed for the Book of Mormon, which was said to have been written by angels on

thin plates in modern Egyptian, hidden miraculously somewhere in New York State, and discovered by Joe Smith through knowledge given to him in a dream. Nor does the Bible claim, like the Koran of the great Mohammedan world, to be a copy of original, divinely-inscribed plates preserved in heaven, the contents of which were whispered in prophets' ears by a dove. None of these or similar fabulous claims are made by our Bible; on the contrary it comes to us in a plain garb of absolute sincerity, with the might of truth and of God manifest in its message, and the marks of man's making evident in its medium. Its various writings often inform us of the human conditions and agent used of God in its production; and without any apology it tells us that God in olden times "spoke in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners." It is a revelation from God to men through men.

Let us examine into the origin of the Old Testament. Whence did this collection of books arise? God revealed Himself partially to and through Moses and the men of his times, and these men wrote down what they learned about the character and will of God as revealed in history and statute; these writings being gradually collected formed the beginning of a Sacred Library, called "The Law." God revealed other truth about Himself and His gracious purposes toward men through the history of the chosen people; through

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the rise and fall of outside nations; through the works of Joshua, the Judges, Samuel, David, Solomon, Elijah, and Elisha; through the greater prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; and through the lesser prophets, Joel, Amos, Hosea, Jonah, Micah, Obadiah, Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi; and these mighty men, or their secretaries or pupils as in the case of Baruch the scribe who wrote out the prophecies of Jeremiah, or their contemporaries, wrote down what they learned of God; and their writings being gradually collected formed a second group in the Sacred Library, called "The Prophets." This second collection was divided by the Jews into two groups of four books each; the first group consisting of Joshua, Judges, the two Samuels in one book, and the two Kings in one book, and called the "Earlier Prophets"; and the second group, being composed of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets in one book, and called the "Later Prophets." These two great collections of writings grew up gradually through the centuries and were known as "The Law and the Prophets." But God revealed also other truth about Himself and His relations to men to and through the singers of songs, the writers of stories, the makers and collectors of maxims, the authors of books of wisdom; and these writings were gradually collected into a third group and

added to the group of "The Law and the Prophets," this third group being called sometimes "The Writings" and sometimes "The Psalms," since the Books of Psalms were the first books in the collection. These three groups of writings, "The Law, the Prophets and The Psalms," constitute the Hebrew Bible, which is identical with our Old Testament; though as already indicated, the books in the Hebrew Bible are not arranged in the order with which we are familiar in our Bibles. These various books in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah were collected, edited, copied and arranged; but *exactly when* the books and the collections took their final and present form no one knows. One of our most conservative Biblical scholars, Canon Westcott, says: "The combined evidence of tradition and of the general course of Jewish history leads to the conclusion that the recognized collection of Old Testament writings in its present shape was formed gradually during a lengthened interval, beginning with Ezra and extending through a part or even the whole of the Persian period," i. e., from 458-332 B. C.; while radical critics bring the formation of the collection as we now have it down a century or two later into the Greek period. The date is one which thus far God has not seen fit to reveal to us.

These, then, are the plain facts about the gradual growth through one thousand years of time

of the various collections of writings which now constitute our Old Testament. This statement is not the particular theory of any special school of Biblical criticism, but is in accord with the facts known and admitted by all intelligent students of the origin of the Scriptures. In other words, the books which constitute the Hebrew Bible, and which are called by us "The Old Testament," because they are connected with the old "covenant," or "testament" as the Latin word means, were not written in heaven by the hand of God, nor by fingers of angels; but were written upon earth by the hands of men whose minds were guided by the Spirit of God. Nor were they written all at one time, nor all in one place, nor all under similar circumstances, nor all by men of similar natural or acquired ability, nor all in the same language, style, and literary form. *The Old Testament is an historical revelation, not given apart from human conditions, nor isolated from the movements of men; not a cold, systematic treatise on ethics nor an abstract statement of doctrine; not a revelation of the character and will of God apart from human history, nor a biography of angels and seraphic beings; but a concrete revelation of God's character and will through the lives of imperfect men and women upon earth, and through the history of the chosen nation.*

Whence came the collection of books connected

with the new covenant and called by us "The New Testament"? Jesus wrote nothing that has come down to us; indeed, we have no record of His writing anything, except what He wrote one day upon the ground; He was not a writer, but an oral teacher. He once made the sublime statement, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"; yet He never wrote a book, nor used modern means to perpetuate His sayings; He simply lived the truth and spoke this truth into the ears of men; He had magnificent confidence in the everlasting power of truth. Whatever He wrote He wrote upon men's hearts, knowing full well that truth once revealed could never perish. Gradually imparting His own truth and life to His disciples, He sent them out to give to others whatever He had imparted to them. So they went out from place to place as traveling evangelists, teaching the things that they had learned from Him and telling the blessed story of God's love in Christ. Wherever the Message was accepted, believers were gathered into little companies for mutual helpfulness, and the evangelists, after various kinds of preliminary instruction, went on to other places; leaving the young Christians to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it was God working in them both to will and to work of His good pleasure.

But many of these converts to Christianity were

made from the adherents of Judaism, or were gathered from the slaves of heathen vice and the dregs of pagan cities; they had understood little about the realities of a spiritual life, and had had small conception of the demands of holiness. When, however, they found life in Christ through belief in a personal, positive Gospel, they found themselves at once in a new world amid the old world, with new relationships and new duties, new privileges and new problems. Questions concerning the new doctrine and the new life kept continually arising in their midst, and they were often in the direst need of some strong guiding hand; amid such circumstances they very naturally would turn to the apostle who under God had led them into the light. They might send one of their number to him for advice; or write to him a letter asking for instruction on certain questions, sending it by one of their members, or by some Christian who might happen to be going that way. Sometimes the apostle himself, hearing either directly or indirectly of the spiritual condition of his young Christian friends and feeling their need of further instruction, of encouragement or warning, would send them a letter. For example, when Paul was at Athens he became burdened for the young Christian converts at Thessalonica and sent Timothy to them to inquire into their spiritual condition and to cheer them in their new life. When Timothy

returned to Paul, who was now at Corinth, and reported what he had witnessed among the believers at Thessalonica, *Paul felt constrained to write to them a letter in which he aimed to strengthen and encourage them in their noble steadfastness, to correct certain defects in their lives, and specially clarify their minds concerning the second coming of Christ.* The members of the Thessalonian church had become much distressed over the fact that some of their believing friends had recently died; all were expecting the personal, visible Return of the Lord in their own lifetime; when He should come, would these believing friends who had already died miss that glad event? This question was greatly troubling the Thessalonian church and Paul wrote to them of it in this letter, telling them that the dead in Christ would rise first and share first in the joyous occasion. This Epistle is the first among the Epistles of the great Apostle that have been preserved, our "First Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians." The Thessalonians, however, seem to have misinterpreted certain statements in this letter from Paul; and, thinking that the second coming of Christ was at hand, they began to neglect the duties of the present and to spend their time in idleness and in religious excitement, waiting for the glad event. It was therefore necessary for Paul, a few months later, to write to them a second letter *urging them to faithful*

daily living as the best preparation for His coming, and reminding them of his former injunction to them against sloth to this effect, "If any will not work, neither let him eat." This is our "Second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians."

The circumstances which called forth and lay at the background of Paul's "First Epistle to the Corinthians" are *a splendid illustration of the way in which God used human conditions as the occasion for the declaration of divine truth.* While Paul was at Ephesus during his Third Missionary Tour, a letter was sent to him by the church at Corinth through three of their members, asking for the Apostle's advice concerning many questions that had arisen in their midst; also through conversation with these members Paul learned still more about the sad spiritual condition of the Corinthian church. Paul discovered in the first place that *the church had become grievously divided into warring factions over various preachers and teachers* that had from time to time visited them; just as sometimes nowadays a church, which has been having for several weeks various candidates for its vacant pastorate, is torn asunder into many parties with varying preferences and opinions. When Paul had visited Corinth he had purposely avoided anything which might appear to be of man's wisdom and had declared in very plain language yet with persuasive logic the great facts of the Gospel; and there were many in the Corin-

thian church that had been greatly helped by his teaching and preaching, never failing in the time of trouble to recall his wholesome words, and oftentimes quoting him upon disputed points: but these people unwisely lifted Paul, as it were, above the Master whose willing slave he was, and proudly called themselves "The Paul Party." But some time after Paul's visit, the eloquent Alexandrian, Apollos, a man who loved to use all of the tricks of oratory, and dealt much in mysticism and philosophy, visited the church at Corinth, and fascinated with his show of wisdom a portion of the membership, who never did enjoy much the simplicity of Paul but were ready to glow over the wonderful eloquence of Apollos; and who, making much of his flowery language and allegorical interpretations, soon formed themselves into an élite clique who never tired of boastingly saying, "*We* are of Apollos." About this same time also, certain teachers from Jerusalem had visited the church and had made much of ritual and of the glories of Judaism, quoting freely from Peter and claiming for him precedence over the other apostles; so that there was formed in the Corinthian church a party that said, "*We* are of Cephas." Other teachers also had boasted of having themselves seen Christ when He was here upon earth, and about them another clique gathered that sanctimoniously took to themselves in a distinctive way the name

of the Master and said, "But *we* are of Christ. We are Christians." Such was the disgracefully divided condition of the Corinthian church, when they sent their letter of inquiry to the great Apostle.

But there were other difficulties in the church life at Corinth. For instance, *there was a case demanding discipline over which the membership was divided*; one of the members was guilty of incest with his father's wife, such a crime as was even shocking to the heathen of the second wickedest city of the world; some of the Christians were in favor of disciplining the offending member; and some, doubtless more lax in doctrine and life and feeling fearful perhaps that the little Church with few and mostly poor members could not afford to lose even one of its constituency, were in favor of retaining him. *Also, some of the Corinthian Christians had actually gone to law with some of their brethren*, and the sad spectacle was presented of those who called themselves "children of the God of peace and brothers of each other," fighting each other before a heathen court of justice: such conduct could not but make the church a laughing-stock to unbelievers: what sadder spectacle than to see professed Christians trying to slaughter each other! *Also, there was a great diversity of opinion concerning marriage*: some who had a tendency toward celibacy affirming that it was more holy

not to marry; while others declared that marriage was ordained of God and in accord with His own clearly expressed will: should Christian widows and widowers marry again? should a Christian marry an unbeliever? Many such questions had been discussed among them without any unanimous opinion being obtained: would Paul be so kind as to help them in these problems? "*The Amusement Question*," also, very early agitated the Christian church: for instance, at Corinth many were asking whether Christians ought to attend, or could without harm attend, the heathen festivals; the most of the church members were poor, and about the only recreation possible for them seemed to be furnished by the public games, games which were dedicated to idols. Moreover, it was customary in that day and place to offer part of the blood or flesh of a slain animal to the idol, thereby consecrating the whole to the heathen divinity: it was therefore impossible to tell, when meat was offered for sale in the market, whether or not it had been dedicated to idols. Should Christians go to such public games; and should Christians buy meat in the open market? What should be the attitude of believers in Christ toward all these things so wrapped up with heathenism and with idolatrous practices? *Certain questions of propriety in the religious assemblies had also arisen.* Jewish males were accustomed in worship to keep their hats on,

while the Greeks were accustomed to take their hats off in religious services; and in this church at Corinth, made-up of both Jews and Greeks, there had been much discussion as to which was the proper form: would Paul be so good as to tell them which custom to follow? How about the women? Shall they keep their hats on in religious services or take them off? and should women teach or speak at all in mixed public assemblies? Other difficulties arose *concerning spiritual gifts*: which was the more important spiritual gift, speaking with tongues or teaching? Suppose that two or three should begin to speak in a meeting at the same time, what rule should be followed? What disorderly services there must have been at times in this Corinthian church! What petty back-biting and jealous quarreling over spiritual superiority! Would to God it were all even now forever gone from the Church of Christ! Still other questions arose *concerning the Resurrection*; some claiming that the Resurrection was purely a spiritual thing and already in the past, while others contended that there was to be a Resurrection of the body and that the great event was still in the future. There was also more or less disorder and lack of impressiveness in *the observance of The Lord's Supper*. Such was the chaotic condition of the Corinthian church, as revealed to Paul through their letter so full of questions and through his

conversation with the members who delivered their letter to him. How Paul must have yearned to go at once in person to them, and through plain forceful teaching lead them out into the clear light of Christlike conduct! but it was not best at this time; nor was Paul able to gratify their request that Apollos should return to them: he could, however, and would write them *a helpful letter in which a few great principles of Christian living should be applied to a multitude of details*: and the letter which he wrote is our "First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians," in which the supremacy of Christ over all merely human teachers, the superiority of love over all gifts, the secret of unity through unselfish service, and the stability of the doctrine of the Resurrection are powerfully proved; as Dr. Farrar says, "the longest and, in some respects, the grandest and most characteristic of Paul's Epistles."

It has seemed advisable to speak somewhat at length with reference to the circumstances and conditions which called this letter into being, because it furnishes such a splendid illustration of the historical character of our Scriptures: certain truths were expressed and emphasized in the form in which we now have them because then and there the necessity was present and pressing for just such truths in just such a form. These writings do not represent

the cold, calm, collected deliberations of some mystical recluse living as a hermit apart from the movements of men; but *they are lightning flashes of heavenly truth lighting up nights of cloud and storm, thunder bolts of divine dynamics forged in the white heat of critical, historical situations:* this is one reason why the Bible always is such a live book, not merely because it *gives* life but also because it *sprung out of* life: it is so concrete, literally "becoming flesh" and dwelling among us, telling us of the trials and triumphs of men and women "of like passions with ourselves." A biography of angels might be a pleasure to the curious, but the God-inspired lives of men and women are found to be profitable to us all.

Soon after Paul had written his "First Epistle to the Corinthians," it was necessary for him to write a second letter in which he defended his own character and apostleship against the attacks of a Judaizing party in the church that hated him because he made little of the Old Testament law and the rites of Judaism, and insisted so strongly upon faith in Christ as the one essential thing in Christianity: this is our "Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians." Also among the churches of Galatia these Judaistic opponents of Paul had caused much trouble, both by casting suspicion upon the genuineness of Paul's character and apostleship, and upon the saving power of the Gospel as preached by him. These Jewish

enemies of Paul said that he was a renegade, an adventurer, not one of the original Twelve Apostles, but only a man-made apostle, having received all he knew of Christ and the Gospel at second hand from those at Jerusalem; and he did not learn it aright either, for he only preached a partial Gospel: he did not preach circumcision, nor understand the true relationship between Judaism and Christianity. So successful were these troublers that many of the Galatian Christians were beginning to turn to circumcision as a necessary part of Christianity, and were drifting away from the simplicity and reality of the Gospel as proclaimed to them so powerfully by Paul. But Paul was unable to visit them personally at this perilous time, though, as he says in his letter, he yearned to come to them and present Christ to them afresh; so he dipped his pen in fire, as it were, and wrote to them our wonderful "Epistle of Paul to the Galatians," *one of the most energetic and impetuous letters that he ever sent to any church, a letter in which he vigorously defended the reality of his apostleship and the sufficiency of faith in Christ for salvation, apart from reliance upon any rites and ceremonies, specially the rite of circumcision as advocated by these Judaisers.* At about this same time Paul was planning to go to Spain, and on the way thither to visit the brethren at Rome. In order to strengthen them in the faith and also to prepare their minds and hearts

for his coming, Paul wrote to the church in Rome a long letter in which he gave a full statement of the Gospel as preached by him in its relations to Jews and Gentiles, "The power of God unto salvation to all who believe." This Epistle contained a more exhaustive and systematic setting forth of the supremacy and sufficiency of faith in Christ than that found in his "Epistle to the Galatians." This is our grand "Epistle of Paul to the Romans."

Some months later Paul was arrested at Jerusalem at the close of his Third Missionary Journey, and for two years lay a prisoner at Cæsarea; then, after a stormy voyage to Italy, he was chained for two years more in Rome to the arm of a Roman soldier; and while in his Roman prison-house he received from the dearly-beloved brethren in the church at Philippi a contribution of their constancy and love, which they had sent to Rome by the hands of one of their members, Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus remained in Rome throughout the winter, and when he returned to Philippi in the spring Paul sent by his hand a letter to the church, one of the most affectionate and personal of all his letters, a letter in which he thanked them most tenderly for their thoughtful remembrance of his necessities; opened out his very innermost self to them and let them read the lofty motives of his life, the secret of his joy and victory; encouraged them in the midst of their

tendency to despondency; and urged them to constant unity of spirit through humble and unselfish service. This was indeed a sweet love-letter, our "Epistle of Paul to the Philippians." At about the same time he wrote from his prison-house in Rome "The Epistle to the Ephesians," a rather general letter, in which with great profundity of thought the excellence of the church of which Christ is the Head is powerfully portrayed. Paul had never visited the church at Colossæ; but, because of the beginnings of a heresy among them known as gnosticism—which was a combination of Judaistical, ascetical, and mystical elements, in some respects quite strikingly similar to the modern so-called "Christian Science"—Paul thought it best to send them a letter which would help them to realize the supremacy and sufficiency of a personal Christ. *"We are complete in Him."* *We do not need this mystical so-called knowledge, or "science," which tendeth to "puffing up" and places angels or other mediators or teachers on an equality with Jesus Christ; He is all in all—this is our* "Epistle of Paul to the Colossians." How human, and accidental, yet how manifestly providential were the events that gave rise to the Epistle of Paul to Philemon! Philemon had a slave, Onesimus, who robbed his master and ran away to Rome; while in Rome Onesimus was converted to Christianity, told his life's story to Paul, and was advised by Paul to

return to his master; because he had wronged him, and also because according to the laws of the land he was his property; Onesimus naturally feared to return, because according to custom his very life was forfeit on account of his crime; but Paul wrote a letter to his old master, Philemon, told him of Onesimus' conversion, and plead with Philemon to receive his runaway slave no longer merely as a slave but as a brother in Christ, even as if he were Paul's own son, and to charge whatever Onesimus might owe him to his own account: this very letter is our "Epistle to Philemon."

Later on Paul wrote to the young pastor, Timothy, a letter full of wise instructions concerning personal godliness and the work of the ministry. Also to Pastor Titus in Crete he wrote a somewhat similar letter for a similar purpose. And then, just before the close of his wonderful life, Paul wrote one more letter, a letter to young Timothy in which we have the glowing and glorious "Last Words" of the great Apostle: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness." The historical origin of these various letters of Paul has been thus briefly sketched in order to make it manifest that *they were written not so much with reference to readers in future years, but in each case to meet some deeply felt spiritual need then and there*: indeed it is probable that Paul

never for a moment thought that these letters would in after years be collected into a Sacred Library for devotional use in ages to come, though behind the conscious purpose of the Apostle was the plan of the Holy Spirit who looked far down the centuries and understood how God was again working through man to bless forever the human race.

During these same years James, the Lord's brother, wrote a general letter to the Jewish Christians that were of the Dispersion, scattered through Asia and Europe; also the Apostle Peter wrote two letters; John wrote three and Jude wrote one. These various letters were highly prized by the churches and individuals to whom they were originally sent, as they were found to be full of inspiration and helpfulness; and very naturally after the first readers had been so greatly blessed by their contents, there arose a desire to pass the blessing on to somebody else; thus churches and individuals began to circulate these letters among their friends; sometimes also this circulation was suggested by the writer himself, as, for example, when Paul wrote to the Colossians: "And when this epistle hath been read among you, cause that it be read also in the church of the Laodiceans: and that ye also read the Epistle from Laodicea." This "Epistle from Laodicea" was either an epistle of Paul's that has not been preserved to us; or possibly, as many

think, the so-called "Epistle to the Ephesians," which seems to have been originally a circular letter, sent to all the churches in succession. When the church assembled for public worship, after the reading of a portion of the Old Testament Scriptures, one of these apostolic letters, or a portion of one of them, would be read to the members: and as the months and years passed by it soon became apparent that as helps to Christian living they were at least as good as the Scriptures of the old covenant: for they also approved themselves to the spiritually enlightened consciousness of the Christian church as being "inspired of God, also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." *Thus toward the end of the first century of the Christian Era there was gradually being formed a collection of sacred writings; having to do with and growing out of the proclamation of the Gospel and the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth, as visibly represented by the various assemblies of Christians gathered here and there in the cities of the world.*

At about the same time that these Apostolic Epistles were being written, i. e., in the sixth, seventh and eighth decades of the first Christian century, another class of writings was gradually coming into existence, i. e., the Gospels. The

first generation of Christians gave themselves heartily to oral teaching and preaching, telling over and over from place to place and to any who would listen the story of the blessed words and works of their risen Master. Specially did they love to sit in their Christian assemblies and listen to one of the Twelve who had actually accompanied the Christ in His earthly ministry, and who had the more intimate and full knowledge of His life. *These earliest Christians were not book-makers; they were too busy with the oral preaching to which Christ had commissioned them, and which the Holy Spirit continuously blessed, to see the desirability of written gospels; and the expected immediate Return of the Lord Himself and the early and complete establishment of the kingdom would make written gospels unnecessary.* But as the years passed away, and the actual eye-witnesses of the life of Christ became fewer and fewer, it began to be manifest to the spiritually-led survivors that the oral Gospels current among them should be committed to writing for preservation in a permanent form. And so John Mark, who for many years had been the constant companion of the Apostle Peter and had heard him in his short, graphic, impetuous manner tell over and over the story of Jesus from the time of John the Baptist until the Master's ascension into heaven, was led by the Spirit of God, of whom Jesus Himself had said, "He shall teach you all

things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you," to write down in a continuous narrative these "memoirs of Peter." *His brief and picturesque story of the Christ presents Him as the servant of God, working with mighty power among men, no sooner speaking than "straightway" what He commands is done; his narrative has all of the marks of an eye-witness and contains many little personal touches such as Peter alone would have been likely to have recalled and mentioned, such as the very full account of the steps that led to and the circumstances of his denial of His Lord. This narrative by John Mark was probably the first of our four written Gospels. Soon after Mark was written, Matthew, the Publican, wrote a life of Christ from the point of view of the Jews, beginning with His genealogy traced from David and Abraham, and continuing through His life; specially showing how He fulfilled this and that Messianic prophecy of the Old Testament and how it must be that He is indeed the Christ who was to come.*

Somewhat later than the writing of the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, Luke, "the beloved physician," who for many years was the almost constant fellow-traveler of Paul, wrote his life of Christ; and fortunately for us he gives in his preface the reason for his writing, which statement tells with no uncertain ring the story of the historical origin of his Gospel, and helps

us in our study of the beginnings of all the Gospels. His preface reads thus: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning those matters which have been fulfilled among us, even as they delivered them unto us, who from the beginning were eye-witnesses and ministers of the Word, it seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed" (Luke 1: 1-4). This preface to Luke's Gospel tells us of *four steps in the preparation of this narrative*. (1) There were the words and works of Jesus, and eye-witnesses to them. (2) These eye-witnesses told to others the stories of the Christ, even as Theophilus had been orally instructed. (3) Many of those who heard the oral Gospels undertook to write out a narrative of the wonderful events that had been related to them. (4) Luke, using all of the material at his disposal, examining carefully into all points from the very beginning and arranging his material in an orderly manner, wrote this convincing narrative to his Greek friend, the Honorable Mr. Theophilus, that he might be convinced of the truth in which he had already been taught. This Gospel of Luke begins at the very beginning of the Gospel story with the announcement of the coming births of John the

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forerunner and of Jesus, the Messiah, and traces the life through to the Ascension; *emphasizing particularly those broad sayings and acts of Jesus which show that He came not merely to save the Jews, but the whole world.* It is often called "The Gospel of Humanity," or "The Gospel for the Gentiles."

Some years after the writing of Mark, Matthew, and Luke, the Apostle John, who was the Master's favorite disciple, who loved most and hence saw deepest into His mission, wrote *a spiritual life of Christ, recording His teachings in His long conversations with His disciples and various other individuals, such as the woman of Samaria, Nicodemus, and Mary and Martha.* This same John also wrote, beside the Fourth Gospel and the three Epistles mentioned elsewhere, "The Revelation," which is *a wonderful allegorical picture of the ultimate overthrow of evil and the final triumph of truth and the kingdom of God.* After Luke also had finished his Gospel, he continued his historical labors by writing an account of the founding of the early churches, *a record of some of the acts of some of the Apostles, specially showing how the door of the Christian church was gradually opened wide to uncircumcised Gentiles upon the sole condition of faith in Jesus Christ.* Of the historical origin of "The Epistle to the Hebrews" mention will be made in our second study. Thus *by the end of*

the first Christian century all of the books which compose our New Testament library, all of them written by Apostles or by those of the Apostolic circle, had come into existence, and were becoming current among the Christian churches. Little by little these writings won their way into the confidence of the people, commending themselves to the spiritually enlightened conscience of the universal church. Certain other writings, not in our New Testament collection, were for a time read in many of the churches and were regarded as equally valuable with these; but the divinely guided mind of the church, and the evidence which comes from personal experience, soon separated the false from the true and the wheat from the tares. Gradually the Epistles, Gospels, Histories, and Revelation that now form our New Testament were gathered into a sacred collection, and by the middle or end of the second Christian century, were regarded as the authoritative records of the new covenant, equally as inspired and profitable for helpfulness in Christian living as the Old Testament Scriptures.

What, then, is the Bible? *It is the reliable record by spiritually-guided men of the gradual and progressive revelation of God to men through men; an Old Testament record which grew up gradually during the course of a thousand years, and a New Testament record which grew up gradually during the last half of the first Christian*

century. But another question just here is very important: *Of what and for what purpose is this recorded revelation?* Is the Bible a record of a revelation of the facts of science, in the terms of science, and for scientific purposes? *Will it answer as a text-book in any department of science?* Let us suppose that this is the term for the study of geology; and that the teacher states to the class: "We are now to take up the study of geology: the history of the rocks, of the relations and characteristics of the various geologic periods, and of the way by which the crust of the earth was gradually made ready for the habitation of man: and we shall take as our text-book upon geology the Bible." Would it be found to be a satisfactory scientific text-book on this great subject? No; there is not a book nor a chapter in it that was written by a geologist, or from a geologist's point of view. It does speak, to be sure, of the Rock of Ages and the chief corner-stone, and often refers to the rocks by way of illustration; but *it is not a history of the rocks, nor a scientific text-book upon Geology.* Moreover, no revelation on this subject was necessary; God's other book, the book of Nature, already possessed a reliable record of this history; let every man who will read the story there: God puts a premium upon toil, and whatever men can find out for themselves need not be the subject of special revelation.

Suppose that we wish to study botany; shall we take the Bible for our text-book? Will it tell us about the history, families, and habits of the flowers? No; it often refers to the flowers by way of forceful illustration, tells us of the rose of Sharon, the lily of the valley, and the grass of the field; but it does not give us any scientific classification or systematic treatment of the flowers. *It was not written to teach Botany.* God has most beautifully inscribed this fragrant history upon the flowery page of Nature, and no other revelation is necessary. If, again, we should wish to study astronomy and learn of eclipses and ellipses, of the movements of sun and moon and stars, would we find the Bible to be a good text-book on this subject? *Does it speak with scientific accuracy of these things, or simply refer to them by way of illustration, using the popular language of the day?* The facts manifest on the page of Scripture compel us to say with Dr. G. D. Boardman that 'the Bible "never treats the facts of science from the scientific point of view. It describes things scenically, not scientifically, phenominally, as they appear." It uses the concrete language of the people. Just so long as there is eloquence, and poetry, and song; just so long as love is mightier than logic and the heart stronger than the head; just as long as the descriptive and concrete are more lasting and impressive than the literally accurate

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and abstract, we shall continue to speak in popular language, even as the Bible speaks, of "sunrise" and "sunset," though deep down in our scientific minds we know certainly that the sun does not rise nor set. *The Bible was not written as a text-book on Astronomy*; God has put that knowledge within the reach of man through telescope and studded sky. The Bible speaks of the sun going "forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," of "the moon and stars the work of God's fingers," of Pleiades and Orion, and of the star of Bethlehem; but it refers to these only by way of illustration. As some one long ago said, "The Bible was written not to teach us how the heavens go, but how to go to heaven." No; it was not written to teach us any department of physical science.

But suppose that we wish to study the general history of the world from the beginning of time up to the end of the first Christian century, *will the Bible be found to be satisfactory as a universal history?* Would it take the place of such a book as Fisher's Outlines of History? No; it was not written from the point of view of the general historian; it was written purely from the point of view of Jewish history, and the history of the beginnings of the Christian church; and it is very fragmentary even here, only the barest outline being given; the history of the great

nations that were contemporaneous with the Children of Israel is passed over in entire silence, except as these outside nations came into contact with the chosen people.

But, if the Bible is not a record of a revelation of the facts of science in any of its departments, nor of general history, of what is it the record? *It is an outline sketch of the facts of redemption. The Bible is the reliable record of the gradual and progressive self-revelation of God to men through men for purposes of redemption. The realm of religion is its continual sphere; the moral and ethical is its constant point of view.* The Old Testament has been well defined as "The divinely-inspired record of the divinely-ordered preparation for a divinely-purposed end," the reliable record of the gradual unfolding of God's purpose of redemption through a coming Saviour. The New Testament may well be defined as the divinely-inspired record of the divinely-inspired beginning and divinely-promised consummation of that glorious end, the full establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth. The character and relations of God and man are continually in the foreground in the Bible, *because the book is distinctively a book of religion; two vital questions are plainly answered on almost every page, "What is the character of God?" "How can man come into conscious and constant communion with Him?"* It tells us of the righteous and loving character of God, as

shown in His yearning desire to provide salvation for every man; and also of the duty and privilege of every man to turn in penitence from his sin and through faith and willing obedience to associate with God. John 3:16 is rightly called "A little Bible," for in epitome it answers both of these questions, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." *God has given us two great books of His might, righteousness and love, the book of Nature and the book of Revelation.* The Spirit in the nineteenth Psalm has put these two books side by side. "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." To have the most symmetrical conception of God and of His world one needs to study these two books side by side. Nature and Revelation are not antagonistic but supplemental to each other. Revelation is necessary in order to disclose certain facts of the divine nature and operations, facts of holiness and love, of sin and salvation, not discoverable in the book of Nature. *The geologist's hammer and the physicist's scalpel have made known to us many wonderful things in God's world, but no hammer or scalpel ever did reveal or ever could have revealed to us God's marvelous plan of world-redemption in Christ Jesus. In the sphere of moral truth the Bible is surcharged through and through with the dynamics of God. In the realm of religion*

it stands without a peer. Here is its divine prerogative; here is its permanent power. Properly translated and interpreted in the light of its character as the record of an historical and progressive revelation of God to men through men for the purpose of redemption, it is, always has been and always will be to the end a reliable and sufficient guide to mankind in all matters of faith and practice. Its purpose is to unveil to us and to help fulfill in us God's gracious purpose of redemption in Christ Jesus.

If, then, the Bible is not a cold catechism of doctrine written far off from the movements of men, but a concrete living record of an historical and gradually progressive revelation; a better way to study it than by the old "hop, skip, and jump" method of using isolated verses here and there, is to study it by books, sections, and historical periods. Its truths are not, as a rule, expressed in absolute terms, but in the relative terms of time, place, and human customs and conditions. While truth is eternal, the expression of truth varies in its form with the thought and necessity of the times. While the kernel is abiding, the husk is temporal, the divine truth of the Bible having been given to us in earthen vessels. The Bible being distinctly an oriental book, *we need to study its sayings in the light of the customs and times of the people to whom it was first addressed.* Christ taught more that was eternal

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and less that was temporary than any other teacher that the world has ever seen; *and yet Christ taught very largely in the terms of His times*, so that it was said of Him, "The people heard Him gladly." Were He living in the flesh and teaching upon earth to-day, He would unquestionably teach the same great truths that He taught then; the holiness and love of the Father, the awful separating and destructive power of sin, the fullness and freeness of salvation to all who believe; but He would teach those truths in the language of to-day, using as His illustrations the objects of our every-day life, probably the telegraph, telephone, electric light, etc., etc. If it should seem to any to be presumption to say that Jesus would do thus, our only and sufficient reply is, "*What Jesus would do is shown by what Jesus did do.*" When He was here upon earth, He did use just such illustrations taken from the every-day life about Him.

Let me in closing give an illustration of such teaching. Once He said, "I am the good shepherd. All that came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice:

and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him; for they know his voice, and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him; for they know not the voice of strangers. The thief cometh not, but that he may steal, and kill, and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. He that is an hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth, and the wolf snatcheth them, and scattereth them: *he fleeth* because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." Let us imagine the Master to be standing in the midst of a company of Montana shepherds, uttering such words; how confusing and even non-sensical to them they would sound from their point of view! "To know every sheep by name," "To lay down one's life for the sheep," what strange sayings are these! How impossible to conceive of such things on a modern sheep ranch! With thousands of sheep in a single flock no such intimate knowledge and relationship is possible. To love the sheep so dearly, how fool-

ish! When pork is high the rancher cares more for his pigs than for his sheep, and only values his sheep according to the market price of wool or mutton. But how different was all this in the land and among the people where Jesus taught; and how impressive is the great truth of Christ's individual love and care as declared so tenderly in this oriental illustration! Then and there the flocks were small, rarely over a hundred sheep, and the shepherds lived in most intimate relationship with them, knowing them individually, and having pet names for each one of the flock; knowing this one perhaps by a limp in one foot, that one by a peculiarity in its bleat, and another one by the weakness of an eye. At night often several flocks would be brought together into a walled-in place called a "fold," and left in charge of "a porter," while the shepherds got a good night of rest; in the morning the shepherd would come and knock at the door of the fold, at whose familiar knock the porter would open the door; entering the fold by the door the shepherd would begin to call his sheep, "Menah! Menah! Menah!" and one would see just those sheep that belonged to him begin to go out of the fold, for they know his voice, they trust his love, they are confident he will not lead them astray. When all of his flock had gone out of the fold the shepherd would go before them, and they would follow his lead. A stranger, i. e., a robber per-

haps or one who would harm them, might try to call them away from his leading; but they would pay no attention to him. Or perchance, when several shepherds had gathered with their several flocks at some little water-brook, you might say within yourself, "All this talk about the sheep knowing the shepherd and not listening to the voice of strangers is merest sentiment! I don't believe a bit of it!" And then you might say to one of the shepherds, "Let me take your crook, and your turban, and your cloak; *I can fool your sheep.*" So, winding the turban around your head, throwing the cloak about you, and taking the shepherd's crook, you start up the hillside calling "Menah! Menah! Menah!" *but you would find that not a single sheep would follow you.* "The voice of a stranger they will not hear, for they know not the voice of strangers." But let the true shepherd only begin to call "Menah! Menah!" and at once the sheep of his own flock begin to follow him. Yonder they go! up over the rocks, down through a narrow pass, now through a dark valley; yet they have no fear, for he is a good shepherd. And if a bear or a mountain lion should try to snatch one of the flock away, the good shepherd even at the risk of his own life, rushes to the rescue, defends his sheep, and destroys or chases away the beast; he loves his sheep, he knows each one by name, he is willing even to lay down his life for his

sheep. In the midst of such customs Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. I love my sheep. I know my sheep by name. I lay down my life for my sheep. My sheep hear my voice and follow me." *Are we following Him, wherever He leads? trustingly? joyfully?*

General Introduction to Hebrews



AT our first hour of study together we considered in a general way the nature and method of revelation from the human point of view, and attempted to answer the important question "The Bible, Whence and What?" We found it to be perfectly manifest that the Old Testament had not come into existence suddenly, all at one time or all in one place, but had grown up gradually during the course of a thousand years; that it is not to be regarded as a catechism of doctrine, written in some far-off place apart from the movements of men, but as a record of an historical revelation, which grew through the centuries as God was gradually making known Himself and His purposes to men, and as men wrote down under the guidance of His Spirit what was being revealed to them. We defined the Old Testament to be the reliable record of God's gradual and progressive revelation of Himself to men through men with reference to those great events which led up to and helped to prepare the way for redemption in Christ Jesus; or

to adopt Dr. Kirkpatrick's admirable statement, "The Old Testament is the divinely inspired record of a divinely ordered preparation for a divinely purposed end." We found also that the New Testament was not miraculously produced all at one time and all in one place, but that it grew up gradually during the first century of the Christian era; that it is not a cold, critical system of theology, nor a scientifically arranged treatise on ethics, but the record of an historical revelation, God gradually revealing Himself through His Spirit and the development of events to these early Christians and leading them by the same Holy Spirit to write down what truth from God had been revealed to them. We defined the New Testament to be the reliable record of the words and work of the predicted Messiah and of the establishment of the kingdom of God upon earth in the founding and promised future of the Christian church. In both the Old and New Testament collection of books we have, then, the record of an historical revelation, which record should be studied historically. If these books were not produced all at one time in some mysterious manner apart from the movements of men, but grew up in the midst of and in the providence of God, sprung out of pressing historical situations, situations which in many instances determined definitely just *what* truth needed to be stated and just *how* that truth needed to be

stated; *then the historical study of these books is a most sane way by which to appreciate both the form and the force of the truths expressed.* This historical study asks with reference to every portion of the Bible five questions which are considered necessary as a preparation to a right understanding of the material under consideration: (1) Where was this written? (2) When? (3) To whom? (4) Under what circumstances and for what purpose? (5) By whom was this written? We shall begin our study of the Epistle to the Hebrews by asking these same questions.

Where was the Epistle to the Hebrews written? As to this question we have no definite knowledge either from the Epistle itself or from outside sources. The subscription, "Written to the Hebrews from Italy by Timothy," which occurs in the Authorized Version of 1611 but is dropped from the Revised Version, is of no value at all; and furthermore there are no geographical or other references in the book itself to furnish us any certain clue as to the whereabouts of the writer. One clause in the last chapter, "they of Italy salute you" (ch. 13: 24), might seem at first to offer us some help, but it is not certain that this clause means more than that there were Italian Christians at the place where he was writing who sent salutation by the letter. "Such a salutation might have been sent from any city in the world in which there were Jewish Christians, or even

Gentile converts, whose home was or once had been in Italy'' (Farrar). *As to where the Epistle was written then we are entirely in the dark.*

When was the Epistle to the Hebrews written? With reference to this question we can come to some kind of an opinion. The whole historical background of the letter is a background of an existing ceremonial system of Jewish sacrifices; daily offerings in the Temple, an ever-present priesthood, constant and conscious dependence of the people upon rites and forms. Now as a matter of unquestioned history we know that Jerusalem was destroyed at the end of the Jewish war by Titus and Vespasian in the year 70 A. D., that the Temple was burned, and that the Jewish sacrifices and ceremonial system then and there perished. There is no question at all as to the date or the fact. It would seem to be certain, then, that the Epistle could not have been written after the destruction of Jerusalem, i. e. after 70 A. D. Had the Epistle been written after the destruction of Jerusalem, much of its argument would have been unnecessary; for the seductions of Judaism, with its magnificent Temple, impressive daily sacrifices and rising incense, white-robed priesthood and gorgeous ceremonial of the day of atonement, perished when the Temple perished. The temptation to apostatize from Christianity to Judaism was done away with, when the God of history permitted the Temple to fall. Nor

is it conceivable that the writer of the Epistle, if he had been writing after the destruction of the Temple, would not have used this fact as the conclusive evidence of the truth of his position; for surely God's will is shown by God's acts. *We have little doubt, then, that the Epistle must have been written before the destruction of Jerusalem.* On the other hand it is evident that a generation of Christians had passed away before the date of this letter, as is evident from chap. 13: 7 and 2: 3. Also the Epistle speaks of "Our brother Timothy" who "hath been set at liberty" (ch. 13: 23). It must have been written then after Timothy had become "a brother," and, having been imprisoned, had been set at liberty. The book of Acts carries the history of important events in the Pauline circle through 63 A. D., without mentioning any imprisonment of Timothy, but we know that in 64 Rome burned, and Nero laid the blame upon the Christians. From that time on to 70 A. D. there was a period of more or less severe persecution and distress, just such an historical situation as lies at the background of this Epistle. Specially was this persecution severe from the outbreak of the Jewish war in 67. Moreover, Paul, writing his Epistles to Timothy, as is commonly believed, in 66 or 67, makes no mention of Timothy's being in prison or of his having been in prison. But in 67 or 68 probably young Timothy was seized and later released. All of

these considerations lead us, with most students of the Epistle to the Hebrews, to conclude that *the letter must have been written at about 67 or 68 A. D., just before the outbreak or in the early months of the Jewish war*, (cf. chap. 10: 25) only two or three years before the destruction of Jerusalem, the burning of the Temple and the cessation of Jewish sacrifice.

To whom was the Epistle to the Hebrews addressed? The ancient title to the Epistle reads "To the Hebrews." *These Hebrews were converted Jews*, Jewish Christians, people who had been brought up amid the rites and ceremonies of the old covenant and who had been led to see in Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah of prophecy. Some have thought that the Letter was a general letter addressed to all converted Jews; but the writer seems to have in mind some specific company of Christian Jews, whom he hopes soon to visit, and to whom he sends a specific salutation (ch. 13: 22-24). *Where did this company of Hebrew Christians live?* Some have thought at Corinth; more have thought in Rome: still more have thought in Alexandria; still more have thought in Palestine, in Judea, possibly right in Jerusalem itself under the very shadow of the Temple, and amid the seductive influences of its impressive services. We may feel certain that the Letter was addressed to converted Jews, though we may not be able definitely to deter-

mine where these Christian Jews lived. They seem to have formed a church made up entirely or almost entirely of Israelites, as no reference to or mention of the Gentiles is made in all the Epistle; and *it is our judgment that they were Palestinian Jews*, coming constantly into contact with the ceremonies of Judaism as gorgeously observed at Jerusalem.

Under what circumstances and for what purpose was the letter to these Hebrew Christians written? This is the most important question of introduction with reference to any portion of an historical revelation. If we misconceive the purpose of a writer, we shall be working all the while from a wrong angle of vision. We need, therefore, clearly to understand the circumstances under which and the purpose for which Hebrews was written if we are to get the right clue to its interpretation. The case may be stated as follows. These Hebrew Christians had been converted some years before (chap. 5: 12) by the preaching of the apostles, whose preaching had been ratified "by signs and wonders and by manifold powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (chap. 2: 3, 4). Some of their early leaders and teachers had by now died (chap. 13: 7), and these Hebrew Christians had in the meantime been subjected to many severe persecutions (chap. 10: 32-34). These persecutions, together with the delay in the Lord's return (chap. 10: 36, 37), had cooled

their Christian ardor and somewhat destroyed their appetite for spiritual things (chap. 5: 11, 12; 6: 12); so that some had even ceased to attend the Christian assemblies (chap. 10: 25), and *many were in imminent danger of apostacy from the faith*. This tendency to apostacy was intensified by the outbreak of the Jewish war and the consequent new call to all Jews to patriotic defense of Judaism; also by the fact that these Christian Jews had been keeping up attendance at the Temple services during all their Christian lives, and had failed to realize the glory and finality of a spiritual religion, such as Christianity, as compared with the temporary and unsatisfactory provisions of Judaism; and also by the presence among them of Jews who still clung tenaciously to Judaism and constantly kept reciting the glories and privileges of this ancient God-given religion. The arguments of these unconverted Jews were that Judaism on the one hand had been given by God through prophets and angels, through Moses and Joshua; that it had its great priesthood of Aaron; its God-inspired Scriptures, its glorious Sabbath-day, its wonderful tabernacle, its Sinaitic covenant, its gorgeous and impressive ceremonial of the day of atonement; that Christianity on the other hand was just a new-fangled affair, with no glorious history, with no Scriptures, no Sabbath day, no wonderful mediators such as prophets and angels and Moses, no white-

robed priests, no tabernacle or temple, no sacrifice or impressive service of the day of atonement. *According to the thought of these unconverted Jews Christianity had none of the marks of a real religion*; for these early Christians were accustomed only to meet before daybreak on the Mount of Olives to say prayers to Jesus as Lord, to read a letter from some apostle or listen to a word of exhortation, to break bread together and sing some Christian hymn, and then to disperse for the day. Their lives and worship were of the simplest sort. There was nothing in their Christian assemblies to compare, so thought the Jew, with the grand services of the Temple. Again we need to recall that during all the years of their Christian life these converted Jews had attended the Temple services as well as the simple Christian assemblies, without seeing any disparity between them; but now *it was becoming more and more apparent that the roads were beginning to separate*. "New wine must not be put into old wine-skins," Jesus had said, "but into new wine-skins." Old things were beginning to pass away, all things were becoming new. It was becoming manifest that Judaism and Christianity were to be completely divorced from each other, that to cling to the new faith would mean exclusion from the privileges of the old, that Hebrew Christians must choose between the two. But did not the peril in which the Jewish cause now

stood call for a patriotic return of every Israelite with new enthusiasm to Judaism? Would not the severe persecutions of these Hebrew Christians be much lessened if they should at once return to the time-honored religion? *Was it worth while after all still to cling to such a simple and apparently poverty-stricken faith as Christianity?* Such were the questions that arose and the considerations that presented themselves to these troubled Hebrew Christians as they stood at the fork of the roads, and hesitated as to whether to continue in the new faith or to turn back to Judaism. To people in such a spiritual state of mind this epistle must have come as a great source of comfort, warning and strength. Judaism, the writer admits, was a God-given religion, given through the mediation of prophets, angels, Moses and Joshua; but Christianity was given through Christ, who is God's own Son and infinitely superior to prophets, to any and all angels, to Moses and Joshua. This is the controlling thought of the first four chapters. Judaism had its wonderful Aaronic priesthood with its human relationship and its divine appointment, its rich tabernacle, Sinaitic covenant and great day of atonement; but Christianity boasts of a priesthood not only as good as that of Aaron but infinitely superior, the royal Melchisedek priesthood of Christ, who ministers in a better tabernacle, on the basis of a better cove-

nant, and accomplishes a service more impressive and efficacious than that of the great high priest of the old covenant. This is the controlling thought of the great central section of Hebrews, i. e., chap. 5 - 10, v. 18. In other words *Christianity is thus proved to be superior to Judaism both in agent and advantages*. On the basis of this proof the last three chapters of the book are given entirely to warning against apostacy from the faith and exhortation to constancy of belief and patient endurance in the midst of present and threatening trials. This was the main purpose of the Epistle to the Hebrews, i. e., *to show the superiority and the finality of Christianity as compared with Judaism, in order effectively to exhort to continued confidence these wavering Hebrew Christians, who were standing at the fork of the roads, uncertain amid their great trials as to what path to choose*. God did speak partially and temporarily in the olden time through Judaism; but He has now spoken again, fully and therefore finally, unto us through His Son who has actually accomplished the full and final forgiveness of sin for all who have faith, and who thus brings about the ultimate goal of all religion, i. e., full and free fellowship between the worshiper and the God whom he worships. Other mediators, other services, other sacrifices have thus been rendered superfluous. Moreover, a clear appreciation of the fact that Judaism, though

God-given and wonderfully impressive in its ceremonies, was only provisional, that *it had now served its time*, was growing decrepit and was soon to pass away, would help these Hebrew Christians to divorce themselves completely from the old and to give themselves undividedly and enthusiastically to Christianity. Their minds, too, would thus be prepared for the shock which was bound to come when soon they would be compelled to see temple, altar, priesthood and sacrifice melt away before the destructive forces of the conquering Roman. *In the midst of all their trouble they needed to know that they had reality and finality in the completed work of Christ and perpetual access to God through Him.* It was manifestly also the purpose of God in giving us this wonderful treatise (for in some respects it is more like a treatise than a letter) that the canon of Scripture, or the collection of sacred writings, might possess one book which should be a classic upon the completeness of the high priestly work of Christ, and forever a standing argument against all of the pretensions of priestcraft.

One other introductory question remains: "*By whom was the Epistle to the Hebrews written?*" Upon this subject much has been said and many diverse opinions have been expressed; but *neither in the early centuries when Christian evidences were carefully considered, nor in modern times when critical methods of study have been applied to the*

Scriptures, has any one opinion been accorded anything like universal adoption. "In the oldest manuscripts the title of the Epistle is simply 'To Hebrews,' which title forms no part of the original document, but must have been given to the book at a very early date, when it first passed into public use as part of a collection of apostolic Letters." So writes Dr. Westcott, whose commentary on the basis of the Greek is the best commentary we have on this epistle. The title in the later manuscripts was gradually enlarged substantially to what we now have. "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews." "In the early church there was no clear or uniform tradition on the subject of the authorship of this Epistle. When the book first appeared in general circulation three distinct opinions about it had already obtained local currency. At Alexandria the Greek Epistle was held to be not directly but mediately Paul's, as either a free translation of his words or a reproduction of his thoughts. In North Africa it was known to some extent as the work of Barnabas and acknowledged as a secondary authority. At Rome and in western Europe it was not included in the collection of the Epistles of Paul and had no apostolic weight" (Westcott). The Eastern church, not caring so much to know who wrote a letter as desiring always to be sure of its inspired contents, was early impressed with the unquestiona-

ble value of this Epistle, and accepted it into the sacred collection, reading it in their regular assemblies and placing it with the writings of Paul. The Western church, being unwilling to accept a writing as worthy a place in the sacred collection, unless they were certain as to its authorship, rejected the Epistle to the Hebrews. *But, as the years went on, the practice of the Eastern church commended itself to the spiritually enlightened consciousness of the church as a whole, and the writing was adopted by all into the canon of Scripture, tradition ascribing it to the Apostle Paul.* If we are compelled to admit that there was no uniform opinion in the early centuries concerning the human authorship of Hebrews, we are still more compelled to admit that among modern scholars there is no unanimity of opinion. It has been ascribed by them to Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Mark, Apollos, Aquila; and now Harnack comes out with the ingenious opinion that it was written by Priscilla. The truth of the matter appears to be that *the data do not exist, either within or without the Epistle, for determining for any very large majority of students the human instrument that God used in the production of this wonderful writing.* If one is led by a study of the statements, style, theology, etc., of the Epistle to believe that Paul wrote the Letter, he will find many earnest students who hold the same opinion. If, on the other hand, one is led,

by the study of the Epistle and a careful comparison of it at many points with the acknowledged writings of Paul, to doubt the Pauline authorship, he will find many earnest students, and perhaps a constantly increasing number, who doubt very seriously whether Paul did or even could have written all that we have in this book.

The title, which occurs in the Old Version, and again unfortunately in the English edition of the Revised Version, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews" has no more weight than the early tradition which enlarged the simpler title of all the oldest manuscripts of the book. This enlarged title came down through the later manuscripts into the versions of Wyclif, Tyndale, and the other early Bible translators whose work furnished the basis for the Old Version. This same enlarged title found place in the English edition of the Revised Version simply and solely because the Revisers had agreed beforehand that they would not change the Old Version titles to any of the books of the Bible, though they did agree to drop the subscriptions which had been added at the end of the Epistles. In the American edition of the Revised Version we have correctly a reversion to the original title as given in the earliest manuscripts "[The Epistle] to the Hebrews."

Whatever may be, however, our final conclu-

sion as to the human authorship of Hebrews, we may well say with Dr. Westcott; "If we hold that the judgment of the Spirit makes itself felt through the consciousness of the Christian society, *no Book of the Bible is more completely recognized by universal consent as giving a divine view of the facts of the Gospel, full of lessons for all time, than the Epistle to the Hebrews.*" That the Spirit of the living God was the inspiration of the writer no one can doubt who carefully and prayerfully peruses its pages. We shall gladly grant the position which it has won in the sacred collection, and shall accept the verdict of History which has put its seal of approval upon the Epistle to the Hebrews, as one of three of the greatest Epistles of the New Testament, the Epistle to the Romans and the First Epistle to the Corinthians being the other two. From the study of introductory questions we have come, then, to the following conclusions: *we know nothing as to WHERE* the Hebrews was written; we feel sure that we *know WHEN* it must have been written, i. e. about 67 or 68 A. D., just a few years before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; we know *to whom* it was written, i. e., to Hebrew Christians, though we are not so sure where they lived, but believe it was in Palestine, in Judea, possibly even in Jerusalem; *we know under what circumstances and for what purpose* the book was written, i. e., when these Hebrew Christians were

under many seductive influences which tended to lead them into apostacy from Christianity to Judaism, when they needed some such writing to prove to them the superiority both in agent and advantages of Christianity to Judaism; but *we do not know who was the human author*, though we feel sure of the book's divine inspiration and lasting worth.

Christ, the Supreme Revelation of God



Chapter I, verses 1-3.

LET us now take up the study of Hebrews chapter by chapter and verse by verse. We shall use constantly in our work the American Revised Version, which we regard as the best translation now in existence. We shall consider first chap. 1: vs. 1-4, which verses form a striking general introduction to the whole book. It will be *well for each one of us to have our Bibles continually open before us*, and to follow the reading, paraphrasing, and commenting very closely. "God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; having

become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they" (chap. 1:1-4). This is the grand opening sentence, which, like a massive porch in front of a palatial building, leads into the great thoughts beyond. Let us take this involved sentence apart, and note in detail its remarkable statements. The writer is evidently contrasting the method, time, and agents of the Old and the New Revelation, intimating clearly the superiority, completeness, and therefore finality of the Revelation through a Son as compared with the partial, and progressive, and therefore imperfect Revelation, through prophets and angels. He does not for a moment question the acknowledged fact that God did speak in that Old Testament Revelation. He only seemingly disparages it as he contrasts it with the fuller Revelation in Christ. *He writes as a Jew, to Jews, and always from the Jewish point of view*, no mention of Gentiles being made anywhere in the book. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers." The Jews divided all time into two ages, i. e., the early age, or first age, or "old time," the pre-Messianic age; and "the latter time," the age of the Messiah. Now in the "old time," *in this early age*, God spake "unto the fathers," the writer meaning by "the fathers" the Jews of ancient times. God did not leave these our ancient ancestors without any knowledge of Himself; He has always

been trying to reveal Himself and His gracious purposes to His people, and to our fathers He spoke during the olden time "in the prophets." The writer uses the word "prophet" in the larger sense, referring to Abraham, Moses, Samuel, David, etc., as well as to Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve Minor Prophets. It was not so much these men who spoke as it was God speaking in them and through them. They were God's chosen agents of Revelation; so that the usual prophetic formula became "The word of the Lord by Isaiah, "The word of the Lord by Haggai," etc. It was God in the olden time speaking unto the fathers in the prophets.

But how did He speak "unto the fathers in the prophets"? "By divers portions and in divers manners." It was "by divers portions," i. e., in many parts, a partial, fragmentary Revelation. God did not reveal all of His will at any one time, or through any one of the prophets; but it was "here a little and there a little, line upon line and precept upon precept," even as the enemies of the prophets had said. (Isaiah 28: 10-13.) *No one prophet revealed the whole character or will of God.* Amos told of His majesty, Isaiah emphasized His holiness, Hosea spoke tenderly of His love. God was speaking "unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions." He spoke to them also "in divers manners," in many ways. Old

Testament Revelation was not only partial and necessarily gradually progressive, but also it was multiform. Sometimes God revealed Himself and his purposes through dreams, sometimes through visions, sometimes through the spiritually enlightened consciousness of the prophet himself, sometimes by the pathetic family history of the prophet as in the sad case of Hosea, sometimes through the unique history of the chosen people, sometimes through the rise or fall of outside nations as Assyria, Babylonia, Egypt. In many ways and in many parts God in the olden time spoke unto the fathers in the prophets. That Old Testament Revelation, grand and glorious as it was, was nevertheless incomplete, and a somewhat inferior Revelation, given through many human speakers, each contributing his little part to the unfolding of God's will. The very variety of the forms and ways by which God was seeking to reveal Himself and His plans was an evidence that through no one of them nor through all of them was He able fully to express Himself.

But now, "at the end of these days," at the close of this first age and at the beginning of this second and last age, this same God, who had spoken so partially, fragmentarily, incompletely and multiformly, through the many messengers of the old covenant, has now spoken fully, and therefore finally, unto us "in a Son." The aorist

tense of the Greek verb "spoke" indicates one definite and complete act. What other interpreter of God's character and will can begin to compare with a Son! Nothing that He shall tell us can be partial, or incomplete, or temporary! *By virtue of His Sonship His Revelation must be complete and therefore final!* A Son will surely be greater than prophets, greater than angels, greater than Moses and Joshua, greater than Aaron! The writer does not hesitate to make Sonship the vital point of comparison, and to emphasize how "the dignity of the Messenger gives authority and excellence and finality to the Message." This Son he describes first as "heir of all things," because heirship inheres in sonship; and lastly as one who has "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," because he would show the completeness of Christ's work as a high priest, and His present regal position, so superior to that of angels, who were the boasted mediators of Judaism. Let us, however, take up the various characteristics of the Son in a somewhat different order.

First, *let us consider the Son as Creator*, "through whom also he made the worlds." "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," but He created them through His Son. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things

were made through him; and without him was not anything made that hath been made" (John 1: 1-3), says the Apostle John in the first chapter of his Gospel. "For in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him" (Col. 1: 16), writes Paul to the Colossians. Jesus Himself said, "Before Abraham was I am" (John 8: 58); and again, in that great prayer recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, this same Jesus said, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17: 5). God, the Father, made all things; but the creative activities of the Father manifested themselves through the Son, who was with Him "before the world was." There are those who do not believe in the pre-incarnate existence of Jesus Christ. There are those who would bound the life of Christ by Bethlehem and Bethany. Yet the consistent teaching of Scripture is that His earthly life was only a parenthesis in time amid the eternity of His being. He was before He came here "existing in the form of God," and "on an equality with God" (Phil. 2: 6). "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy

hands" (Heb. 1: 10). His pre-incarnate existence and His present existence seem to be biblical doctrines which stand or fall together; *both are abundantly established upon the strongest kind of scriptural evidence: both have strongly commended themselves to the enlightened Christian consciousness of the ages.* To this pre-incarnate Son the creation of the world is plainly ascribed, "the world" referring here either to the constituent elements of the universe, or perhaps even better to the ages that make up the world's history. He has supplied the plan of the centuries; "He is the divine idea of the world."

He not only made the heavens and the earth, and supplied the world-plan of the ages; but He is even now "upholding all things by the word of his power." He was not only the world's Creator; *He is the world's Sustainer.* He—not some mythical Atlas, nor some blind Fate, nor some impersonal Order of the Universe—He, who died on the cross for you and for me, is the One who is the God of Providence. "He is the prop that underpins creation." He is the One "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." "By him," Paul wrote to the Colossians, "all things consist," or subsist, or hold together. This wonderful Son of God is not only the world's Creator and Sustainer; *He is the world's Redeemer;* He has "made purification of sins." The whole book is a development of this thought

of His completed work in that He has "made purification of sins," so we shall pass the phrase with mere mention of it now.

Creator, Sustainer, Redecmer, this same Son is *also the world's Heir and Ruler*, "whom he appointed heir of all things." Because He is a Son, heirship belongs to Him. Even in the days of old it was heaven's decree concerning this greater Son of David; "Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa. 2:8). This world belongs to Christ. He made it. He sustains it. He has redeemed it. He will ultimately rule it. *Even now He is its King*, though His lordship is not everywhere recognized. Sometimes you and I are tempted to give way to discouragement concerning the work of the church and concerning the cause of righteousness. We see the highways of sin and selfishness crowded with the throngs and apparently so few entering the way of life. We see the hell-holes of iniquity, even when a price is charged for admittance, always full of enthusiastic devotees, and the churches of Christ half filled with an indifferent few. Evil seems to be rampant. Righteousness creeps on with a snail pace. But why should we be so downcast by these things and so despair of the final outcome? Did not the Master Himself tell His disciples that it would be so; that the triumph of the kingdom

would be gradual; that much seed would fall by wayside, upon rocks and amid thorns? And has not the God, who sits upon the throne at the center of the universe, your Father and mine, said of His well-beloved Son, "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet"? In that word "until" is sufficient inspiration for every one of us throughout the swiftly-moving or the slowly-creeping years, even up to that very day, when He shall be crowned "King of Kings and Lord of Lords." *It is a great source of strength to know that one is on the winning side; to know that our cause cannot fail.* Sometimes we take a too narrow view of the kingdom; and, concentrating our thought upon the condition of spiritual things in some one spot, we allow ourselves to lose heart. We need to lift our eyes to the hills; we need to widen our circle of vision; we need to take a broad sweep over the wonderful triumphs of the cross; we need to consider centuries not days; and at all times to remember who has redeemed us and whose we are. Our Saviour and King is the world's Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer and King. Because He is God's own Son, He cannot fail of His kingdom. It need not make so much difference whether we go down in the apparent defeat of Bull Run, or live to share in the honors of a Gettysburg or the joys of an Appomattox, we shall not miss our portion in the day of the Grand

Review. Never let us forget that God has "appointed him heir of all things."

Still further to show the superiority and finality of this later Revelation, the writer continues to declare the greatness of God's Son. He is not only Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and King; he is also "the effulgence of his glory and the very image of his substance." *As the sunbeam reveals the character of the distant sun, so Christ reveals to us the character of God.* We learn about the distant sun through the nearby sunbeam, which is the effulgence of its glory, the outshining of its brightness. As the sunbeam comes through the window, the scientist passes through it the prism of the spectroscope, in order to analyze the sunbeam, and study through it the sun of which it is the outshining. Burning a piece of carbon before his class and noting the character of the flame given, he calls the attention of the class to the presence of a similar light in the sunbeam, and then says, "This is that; there is carbon in yonder distant sun." And if some skeptical student should say, "Why, Professor, how do you know that? You have never been to yonder distant sun, nor really ever seen it. How do you know that there is carbon there?" And the Professor will answer at once with absolute and undisturbed confidence: "I know it, because I see the carbon in the sunbeam." This is science, accurate and reliable. In this same way the teacher

will demonstrate still further the character of the distant sun. So Christ is the outshining of the Father's brightness, "the effulgence of his glory." John truly tells us that, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him," he hath interpreted him, he hath given an exegesis of him, he hath revealed him. (John 1: 18.) Some time your child, or your Sunday-school scholar, or your friend, will come to you and say, "Who is God? Where is God? What kind of a person is God? I have some kind of an idea of Moses, and David, and Jesus, and Paul; but I don't seem to be able to get any definite idea about God. Who is God?" So once the disciples felt; and Philip got up the courage to ask Jesus in behalf of them all, "Master, who is the Father? Where is the Father? You are all the time talking about God, the Father. Where is He? What is He? Lord, show us the Father, and it will satisfy us." "Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, Show us the Father?" (John 14: 8, 9.) *So when one wishes to know definitely what God is, point him to Jesus Christ.* As we study Christ's words and works, and note His yearning, burning desire to save men and women from the sin that was and is destroying them, we know how God yearns and

burns for their salvation. As we note Christ's strong denunciation of sin in every form and His constant antagonism to all that is unrighteous, we know how God feels toward such things. *"What Christ is, God is. What Christ says, God says. What Christ does, God does."* "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Every one may find a satisfactory answer to his questionings about the character of God in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Let each troubled one learn with Thomas, not on the basis of physical sight and touch, but upon the basis of faith in evidence, to bow down before Christ and to cry out with a burst of rapturous joy, or with calm confidence, "My Lord and my God."

This wonderful Son is also "the very image, or impress, of his substance." The signet ring had upon it a seal, the symbol of authority, which, when pressed down into the hot wax, left upon it an image which corresponded exactly to that of the seal. *So Christ is God impressed upon humanity, expressed in humanity, "God manifested in the flesh."* Immanuel-God, with human form, "in fashion as a man," God incarnate. As John says, "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," "that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled." This Son is a true, authoritative, revelation of the invisible God. It is through Him that God has spoken unto us, in

a full and therefore a final Revelation; through a Son who is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and King, the outshining of His brightness and the impress of His substance.

This Son, in His great service of making purification of sin, has done His work so thoroughly, completely, and satisfactorily, that He has now "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high"; sat down because He is worthy to sit down; *sat down because His work of sacrifice for sins is done.* The Old Testament High Priest came into the Holy of Holies with fear and trembling, standing as a suppliant; and his work as "a sacerdotal drudge" was never done; every year His work needed to be repeated. But Christ, having completed His great and eternally efficacious work, has sat down, royally to mediate "at the right hand of the Majesty on high," having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they." This fourth verse furnishes a transition to the subject of the rest of the chapter, and will be the starting-point for our next study.

Greater than Angels



Chapter I, verse 4—II. verse 4.

IN the majestic opening sentence of Hebrews the writer has told us that the same God, who was speaking unto the fathers in the days of old in a partial, multiform, and therefore incomplete and more or less unsatisfactory Revelation, given to them through many prophets, has spoken again at the end of these days once for all, fully and finally, unto us, in a Son; this Son being just the one to give such a Revelation, since He is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and King, the very outshining of God's glory and the express image of His substance. Having thus stated so strikingly the dignity and unique position of the Son, it must seem to every one of us a great step down for him to stop to say, what would seem to be implied in His exalted position, that the Son has "become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they" (v. 4). From our point of view it seems to be decidedly a weakening of the case to compare this exalted Son of God with angels, angels who

dwindle into absolute insignificance in the presence of the crowned Christ.

But we must look at the case from the point of view of the first readers, these Christian Jews. In the Jewish thought angels were everywhere; in modern thought they are hardly anywhere. "There is not a thing in the world," says the Talmud, "not even a tiny blade of grass, over which there is not an angel set." The Jewish thinkers went to one extreme and personified every force of nature, ascribing to the work of angels every event in life whether great or small. Many moderns are in danger of going to the other extreme, reducing all of the events of life to the operation of natural laws and chemical forces, and driving out all spiritual or angelic agencies from the sphere of human affairs. When we think of the variety of God's operations in the realm of the physical, it is not hard to believe in a similar variety in the realm of the spiritual. The references in Scripture to the reality, number and services of angels seem to be very abundant and convincing both in the Old and the New Testament. Angels figured conspicuously in the patriarchal histories, in the days of the Exodus and the giving of the Law, in the days of Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah and Daniel; likewise in the life of our Master, in the history of the Early Church, in the lives of Peter and Paul. *We shall do well to note how frequently they appear in the Scripture,*

and yet how sane are their actions and rational the service rendered by them. Again and again they appear as the messengers of the Almighty and the ministering spirits of His own people.

But the greatest work that angels were ever privileged to accomplish, according to the mind of every Jew, was the giving of the law to Moses. According to the well accepted tradition of the Jews ten to twenty thousand angels were present at Sinai when the Law was given. Stephen, in his fearless speech before the Sanhedrin, had charged with unfaithfulness the Jews, "who received the law as it was ordained by angels" (Acts 7: 53); and Paul in Galatians refers to the law "ordained through angels" (Gal. 3: 19). The writer of Hebrews does not stop to tell us how much nor how little of the current doctrine of angels he himself believed, but pushes at once into the proving of what needed to be established in his argument just at this point, i. e., that *Christ, the mediator of Christianity, is greater than any and all angels*, angels who were the boasted mediators of Judaism. In the mind of the Jew the dignity, authority and glory of Judaism were enhanced by the fact that thousands of angels were present at Sinai, through whose agency the law was given to Moses. But this writer claims a superior dignity, authority and glory for Christianity, in that it was given through Christ, who has "become by so much better than the

angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they."

By Christ's "inheriting a more excellent name than they" our author means that in the Psalms and Prophets of the Old Testament, which foretell Christ's greatness and His glory, more exalted titles are used and greater things are spoken of Him than are ever declared of any angels. The argument that is here presented is not an argument addressed to unbelievers and calculated to prove the divinity of Christ; but it is an argument to those who already believe, whose faith needs to be strengthened by the contemplation of Christ's exalted function. It was not necessary here to prove the inspiration of Scripture, nor the Messianic reference of the passages quoted. Both would be freely and without question admitted by all Jewish teachers. To the modern student difficulties are suggested both by the character of the passages used, and by the method in which they are used; but to the original readers and to the writer no such difficulties presented themselves. The Greek translation of the Old Testament was the version commonly in use at that time; the Messianic import of the passages depends upon the two following well-known principles of interpretation: "All statements concerning men, say, kings of Israel, which rise above the historical reality into the ideal are Messianic; secondly, statements concerning

Jehovah viewed as the Saviour coming in later days to help His people are also to be regarded as Messianic" (Bruce).

Setting side by side passages from the Old Testament, which by common consent were regarded as referring to David's Greater Son, and other passages which just as certainly refer to angels, the peerless pre-eminence of Christ is clearly shown. *Angels have indeed an honorable position, but the function of Christ is more honorable still.* "For unto which of the angels said he at any time,

"Thou art my Son,

This day have I begotten thee?" (v. 5.)

Yet God said this in Ps. 2:7 of David's Son. The writer of the second Psalm, recalling the great promise of God through Nathan concerning David's house and realizing how far short the real came of the ideal, looked down the centuries and saw in prophetic vision the coming of that Greater Son, saw some great revolt against His rule, and noted the calm and quiet in heaven as the divine decree, the basis of His authority, was proclaimed:

"Thou art my Son,

This day have I begotten thee."

Surely no such exalted thing as this is said anywhere in Scripture of any angel. And again in 2 Sam. 7:12 God says of David's Son:

"I will be to him a Father,

And he shall be to me a Son." (v. 5.)

To be sure, all of the kings of the house of David were to stand in the relation of sonship to God, but this relation was fully realized only by that Greater Son, the Christ, of whom they were but faint types. To be sure, angels are in a general sense called at various places in the Old Testament "the sons of God"; so all believers are to-day called "the sons of God"; but this title is used in a unique and wholly distinctive sense with reference to Christ. *God has never singled out any one angel and declared of him the exalted name that Christ has inherited.*

The superior position of the Christ is made still more apparent in that all the angels of God are commanded to bow down and worship the Son. It matters not to what time the saying refers; whether to the time when the first-born came to earth and angels sang "Peace on earth, good will to men," or to the time when the Christ was received back to His heavenly home after His victory on earth, or to the time when He shall come again in all "his glory and the holy angels with him"; the significant fact is the saying of Scripture: "Let all the angels of God worship him" (v. 6). We worship not the lesser but the larger. *All* angels are commanded to bow down and worship Christ. He is a Son; they are servants. His position is one of solitary grandeur compared with theirs.

This becomes still more manifest when you

recall what is said in Ps. 104:4 concerning angels; for there "of the angels he saith:

Who maketh his angels winds,
And his ministers a flame of fire." (v. 7.)

And when we recall how Jewish angelology had personified every force of nature, and how the Rabbis were accustomed to teach that "God makes His angels assume any form He pleases, whether men, or women, or wind, or flame," we see at once the aptness and the force of the quotation: "The title given to angels, honorable as it is, is one which they share with the unconscious energies of God's creation; the winds and the lightnings are His angels too." Fleeting in appearance and changeable in form, they have no such exalted position as the Son; He is a King; they are merely subjects; for of Him it is said in Ps. 46:6, 7:

"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever;
And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.

Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity;
Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." (vs. 8, 9.)

Here again the inspired psalmist, thinking of that ideal Son of David, who was to come and who would be so much greater than any of the real Davidic kings, speaks of Him with a divine title and declares that His throne will be for ever and ever. On account of His character and worth

God has anointed Him *above His fellows*. Whoever these "fellows" may be, whether contemporary princes, men, or angels, Christ, the Son, is greater than them all.

And again, you, who already believe that Christ created the world and who only need that your faith in His exalted prerogatives should be strengthened, should recall how it is written of Him in Ps. 102: 25-27:

"Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth,

And the heavens are the works of thy hands:

They shall perish; but thou continuest:

And they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

And as a mantle shalt thou roll them up,

As a garment, and they shall be changed:

But thou art the same,

And thy years shall not fail." (vs. 10-12.)

Christ, the Son, was before all created things, and He will be after all; He was creator, He will be the dissolver; they will gradually wear out, but He shall continue the same forever. His position is one of unapproachable pre-eminence.

"But of which of the angels hath he (God) said at any time," as He said in Ps. 110: 1 of David's Greater Son:

"Sit thou on my right hand,

Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet?" (v. 13.)

Was ever any such exalted thing said *at any time*

concerning *any angel*? But all of these great things have been said of the Christ. *He is a Son, they are servants; He is a King, they are subjects; He is the Creator, they are creatures; His position is a royal one, their position is ever a menial one.* Do angels ever appear as independent, self-originating actors in the sphere of life; or are they always under orders, carrying out the purposes of another? Is not their position always a subordinate one? The writer does not care to discuss the nature of angels, but he does insist upon their position and function. No word of dominion or rule is spoken of them. They are not to be worshiped, or regarded as independent powers. They are "ministers of His that do His pleasure," the pages of Creation that flit here and there on the errands of the king, and in the interests of those who are being saved. *None of them are independent rulers, but always and ever servants merely.* "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (v. 14)

And now, in Heb. 2: 1-4, the writer relieves somewhat the strain of the argument, as he frequently does in the first ten chapters of his book, chapters which are mainly argumentative, by giving an earnest exhortation upon the basis of the point proved, i. e., that Christ, the Mediator of Christianity, is infinitely superior to angels, the boasted mediators of Judaism. There should

be of course no division of chapters here, as the exhortation of chap. 2:1-4 is most closely connected with the argument which ends in chap. 1:14. Dr. John A. Broadus, in speaking of the work of the man who divided the Bible into chapters and verses, was accustomed to remark that "ordinarily he did his work pretty well, but that on some occasions he must have worked a little too long at his task and become tired and sleepy; then his work was not so good." Here is one of those places where he had evidently gotten "tired and sleepy." If any chapter division is to be made between chapters 1 and 2, chapters which constitute the first great section of the book, it should be made between verses 4 and 5 of the second chapter. Chap. 2:1-4 are to be closely joined to what precedes.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away *from them*. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will." (Heb. 2:1-4.) "Therefore," because of the dig-

nity, authority and glory of such a superior Revelation which has been given through God's Son, who is so much greater than angels, "we," who have been believers for years and have been permitted to enjoy such privileges, "ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard," the truths of the Gospel, "lest we drift away from them." These Hebrew Christians, after years of faith, were in danger of being carried out upon the sea of Judaism and apostacy from Christianity; even as a vessel after having made the port and having been made fast to the wharf, is still in danger of slipping her hawser and being carried out to sea by some tidal wave bursting in upon it; or as some vessel, when apparently safely anchored, is in constant peril of being drawn away from its anchorage by the steady pull of some strong current. So, on account of the new call to patriotic defense of Judaism, on account of the continual attraction of the ritual of the Temple and the failure of these Christian Jews to appreciate the glory and finality of a spiritual faith, on account of the incessant persecution to which they were subject, *the first readers of this letter were in great danger of being swept away from their anchorage out upon the joyless billows of endless ceremonialism, away from the distinguished privileges of this complete and last Revelation of God.*

It was an urgent necessity, then, that just at

this time, recognizing the peril of all to drift with the currents of life and circumstance, the writer, identifying himself also with his readers, should say, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them." *The law of life is that "to whom much is given of them will the more be required."* Benefits received imply obligations incurred. We, who live, then, in the full flood-tide of God's completed Revelation through His Son, the heirs of all the past and the participators in a religion of freest fellowship, must hold fast to the privileges that have come to us; the penalty of neglect is greater than any of us can afford to incur. For, if that Old Testament Revelation, which was so partial and fragmentary and given bit by bit through many messengers, even "the word spoken through angels"; if that, nevertheless, was good as far as it went, a trustworthy though only partial Revelation of God; if "every transgression," or sin of commission, and every "disobedience," or sin of omission, "received a just recompense of reward, *how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation?*" Truth is sometimes most tersely told by asking a startling question. This question is powerful in its rhetorical form and dramatic in its unmistakable meaning. There can be no escape for those who thus turn permanently away from such exalted privileges.

The writer has not here in mind, at least primarily if at all, as Dr. R. W. Dale so well expresses it, "the future condition of those who have never heard of the Lord Jesus Christ, or of those to whom the Gospel has been presented under such a dark disguise that it is not wonderful they refuse to give any heed to it, or the future condition of those whose intellectual idiosyncrasies have made it almost impossible for them to receive the theory of the Christian faith, or the future condition of those who, from the miserable influences under which they have lived from their childhood, have lost nearly every moral element to which the Gospel appeals." Nor is the writer primarily considering the future state of those "who for no such reasons as the above have uniformly and persistently rejected the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." *This exhortation and warning is clearly addressed primarily to those who for years have been believers, but are now in danger of apostacy;* the awfulness of whose apostacy is emphasized by the fact that such apostacy would be the turning away from a great salvation, which, at the first was "spoken through the Lord," God's own Son, Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, King, the outshining of His brightness and the very image of His substance, One who now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high; in other words, apostacy from a salvation so wondrously inaugurated.

Also from a salvation that was "confirmed unto us by them that heard," i. e., was established on the firm evidence of the eye-witnesses themselves, "God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will." *How shall we escape, who have enjoyed such privileges, if we neglect so great a salvation, so gloriously inaugurated by God's own Son, so thoroughly substantiated to us by the very eye-witnesses, God Himself also taking the witness-stand with them and confirming their testimony by all of the wonderful achievements of the apostolic age, "the signs and wonders and manifold powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his will"?*

It is a "great salvation" when we think of *its provisions*. That once for all, at the consummation of the ages, by one supreme sacrifice of Himself, Christ should have wrought out salvation for all men, and have made provision for the salvation of all, is surely a "great salvation." Living, dying, rising again "once for all"; for all people, for all ages, for all necessities; surely it is a "great salvation." For Jew and Gentile, for bond and free, for male and female, for rich and poor, for educated and uneducated, for the worst as well as for the least of sinners, for the people of the tenth, or twentieth, or thousandth century if such there should be, as well as for the people

of the first century; surely it is a "great salvation" in its provisions.

It is also a "great salvation" *in its cost*; for it was not given through prophets, or angels, or subordinate messengers, or mediators, but through God's only-begotten and well-beloved Son, "who though rich, for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich"; "who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross"; who is Creator, Sustainer, and King, now sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high; surely it is a "great salvation" in its cost.

It is also a "great salvation" *in its penalties*. How can any one escape if he neglects so great a salvation? *Specially terrible must the penalty be for those who have known to do right and do it not*, for any who have once shared in the special mercies of God and keep turning away. Did not Jesus once tell in parable form the inevitable consequences of such gross neglect? "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away;" and again, "if a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire,

and they are burned." "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed unto the things which were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

Now, if these words were full of power for these Hebrew Christians with their privileges and their perils, *with what added force they should come to us Christians to-day!* What privileges are ours! "Heirs of all the ages, in the foremost files of Time." What evidences of Christianity have come to us through the nineteen centuries of Christian history! We have all that they had and so much more; the incontestable records of unimpeachable eye-witnesses, and the millions, whose self-consciousness and personal experience have furnished to us the surest basis of knowledge. What fires of persecution have tested the witnesses! What assaults of hostile and destructive criticism have been turned back! What conquests of the cross have borne and still do bear most telling testimony to the presence and power of the crucified, risen and crowned Christ! "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?"

And are there to-day no currents that tend to drift one away from the harbor of peace and power? Currents of commercialism, currents of pleasure, currents of skepticism, currents of materialism, currents in the direction of this ism

or that ology? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Let us not deceive ourselves. We cannot be Christians without Christ. We need always to keep united to Him. "Apart from me, ye can do nothing." As Dr. Dale has expressed it, "*It is by permanent faith that we have permanent justification, by permanent unity with Christ that we have permanent spiritual life.*" "There is no condemnation to those that are in Christ." "Abide in Him," and all is well; apart from Him all is lost. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?"

God's Ideal of Man



Chapter II, verses 5-9.

WE now come to the consideration of Heb. 2: 5-18, *one of the most remarkable passages in this wonderful epistle.* These verses constitute in the structure of the book the second part of the first preliminary section (chapters 1 and 2), of which section the superiority of Christ to angels is the central theme. This superiority of Christ, both in nature and office, to the angelic mediators of Judaism has been abundantly shown by numerous quotations from the Old Testament (1: 4-14), quotations which always speak of angels in subordinate terms and of Christ in superior terms. Angels are described as "ministering spirits," like winds or flames of fire, flitting here and there on the errands of the King and for the sake of those who shall inherit salvation. Christ, on the other hand, is described as a Son, Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, King, One who now sits on the right hand of God, where He shall sit until

His enemies be made the footstool of His feet. These Hebrew Christians believed in the divinity of Christ, and in the reality of all the superior things that have thus far been declared of Him in the previous verses; but they were troubled by the old and ever new question, "*How combine in thought the divinity and the humanity of Christ?*" Moreover, unconverted Jews kept constantly reminding them of the facts known to all, His lowly life and shameful death. *Were not these facts utterly inconsistent with the thought of His divinity, His supposed superiority to angels?* It was not a matter of great difficulty for the Jew to conceive of God having a Son, through whose agency He might chose to create, sustain, redeem and rule the world; a Son who should be the out-shining of the Father's brightness and the image of His substance. Nor was it hard for him to conceive that this wonderful Son should come to earth as the highest and most complete expression of God's character and will, and to save his people from their sins. *But how to connect these great thoughts about this wondrous Son of God with Jesus of Nazareth, a mere man who was born so humbly, lived a life so lowly, and died so shamefully; ah, here was the great problem!* "*A meek Messiah! a crucified Christ!*" *It seemed scandalous! for it was so contrary to their expectations.* "Had not the inspired and God-honored prophets plainly declared that the Messiah was

to be a second David, and that He would surely and powerfully restore the kingdom to Israel? Did they not eagerly describe in glowing terms the glory of His royalty and the grandeur of His reign? But this Jesus of Nazareth was so unlike these pictures. How can we believe that He is the Christ? 'Greater than any and all angels,' you say? How can we think so, when upon earth He lived so obscurely and humbly; partaking of flesh and blood, living a life of poverty and dying a death of shame? Are not these things inconsistent with the greatness said in the first chapter to be true of Him?" In his answer to these objections raised constantly by the unbelieving Jews, in his desire to strengthen the wavering faith of these Jewish Christians, by showing the greatness of Christ's salvation, and the necessity of His humanity and death as the means by which this salvation was procured, the author gives us the great thoughts of Heb. 2:5-18.

It is not to be imagined that in such outline sketches as these brief studies any one can probe to the bottom of such a wonderful passage as this; for *in these verses are some of the deepest thoughts about the marvelous plan of salvation that God has revealed to us.* Nevertheless the most superficial glance with the mind must stimulate our own thinking, while a mere touch with our hearts will stir mightily our souls. I recall that once when Washington Irving was at Strat-

ford-on-Avon he was told that no one in modern times had ever seen the bones of Shakespeare, but that on one occasion, one, who was building a vault near by the famous tomb, climbed up on the separating wall and looked over into Shakespeare's vault, and "saw nothing but a little pile of dust." "But," mused the genial Irving, "methinks it was something only to have seen the dust of Shakespeare." When Jesus moved about doing good among men, a poor woman once, we are told, tremblingly stretched her hand through the crowd that surrounded Him and touched one of the four tassels that hung from His Jewish girdle; and though she touched but the hem of His garment, she received a wonderful blessing. And so we may justly feel about this wonderful passage; though we may touch but the outside, we shall be blessed.

"For not unto angels did he subject the world to come, whereof we speak" (2: v. 5). Angels were, to be sure, the glorious mediators of the old covenant; but in this new age, which is now come and is to come in glorious consummation in the future, of which the author is now writing, not angels but glorified man, as first seen in the man Christ Jesus, is superior. *Man is to be specially exalted, and in order to bring him this great salvation Christ was for a time lower than angels.* Angels are not to be supreme here, "But one hath somewhere testified, saying:

'What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
Or the son of man that thou visitest him?
Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;
Thou crownedst him with glory and honor,
And didst set him over the works of thy hands:
Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet.' "

(vs. 6-8.)

The quotation beginning "What is man," etc., is taken from the eighth Psalm. This Psalm is one of the four Psalms of David, expressive of his feelings as a shepherd boy, the nineteenth, twenty-third, and twenty-ninth being the other Psalms of his poetical youth. These Psalms were written either when David was in reality a shepherd boy upon the hills of Bethlehem, or else were written late in his life and were a reflection of his feelings when a boy. James Whitcomb Riley once observed that when he was a boy he thought of what he would do when he became a man; when he became a man he often thought of what he used to do when he was a boy. This eighth Psalm is a song of the night. The sun, which went forth in the morning, "as a bridegroom out of his chamber, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race," has now finished his circuit from one end of the heavens to the other, and has dropped out of sight, apparently beneath the waves of the blue Mediterranean. But no sooner does the sun disappear than the moon and the stars begin to shine. As the shades of night deepen, the stars seem to glow with greater brilliancy, and hang

like balls of fire in the clear vault of an oriental sky. Those who have spent nights in Colorado recall how near and how large the stars seem to be in such an atmosphere. David is tending his father's flock on the quiet hills of Bethlehem. Being both an oriental and a shepherd poet, he is much given to star-gazing. Amid his lowly duties he has lofty thoughts. His poetic soul is aglow with inspiration. The glories of the night-time feed the muse's fire; and, as he lies upon his back amidst his sheep, and peers into the starry heavens, his soul bursts forth into ecstasy as in this eighth Psalm:

"O Lord, our Lord,
How excellent is thy name in all the earth!
Who hast set thy glory upon the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings" (David is a mere boy) "hast thou established strength,
Because of thine adversaries,
That thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man" (man in his weakness and littleness),
"that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man that thou visitest him?"

"When I think of the heavens, and their wide extent, thy creation; when I look at the moon and the countless stars, the work of thy fingers, *what is weak, little insignificant man that thy mind is full of him; and the son of man that thou art willing to visit him?*" This is the inspiring

thought that swelled the soul of the shepherd boy.

David was a star-gazer, but not a star-worshiper. Egyptians to the south worshiped the sun under various names; Babylonians to the east worshiped sun, moon and stars; but David was a true Hebrew, a monotheist. He looked behind Nature to Nature's God. To him "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." To him moon and stars tell of the God who made them. And yet, how little it was that David knew concerning the real extent of our wonderful universe; but blessed is he who uses what knowledge he has and turns his thoughts toward God. What a comparatively small world it was in which David lived and moved; and yet how big it became to him who saw it filled with God. *What did David really know about moon or stars or heavens!* Those ancient catalogues of stars tell of only about one thousand stars. The recent International Photographic Survey of the Heavens tells us of hundreds of millions of stars. What did David know about the movement of the spheres, or of countless worlds revolving about a central sun! To David the earth was but a flat plain, more or less limited in extent; and the heavens were a tent stretched above the earth, in which moon and stars were hung as lamps. To the Greeks these same stars seemed golden nails fixed

in a crystalline sky. David knew nothing of the discoveries of Copernicus. David had never looked through a mighty modern telescope, and had little conception of the vast distances to and the real number of the stars. How many of us, who know so much more of the wonders of the heavens, possess the splendid reverence that his glowing soul felt, when he sang:

"When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers;
The moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him?
And the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

How the Copernican theory intensifies the truth of this psalm! With what tremendous force does the thought of the immensity of the universe, and the insignificance of man come upon one whose soul has been opened to the wonderful revelations of modern astronomy! Once it was thought that the earth was the center of the universe, and that all other worlds were regulated with reference to it. Now we regard the sun, which is equal to the weight of 355,000 earths, as the center of our system; and our system is only one of 25,000,000 such sun systems which belong to our cluster; and our cluster only one of many such clusters of sun systems. Verily, we are ready to cry out again with added reverence and awe, "What is weak, little, insignificant man that thou art mindful of him?" Verily he is a mere speck on a speck! Our only hope for man

amid the immensity of the universe is in the doctrine of a personal God in whose image and likeness he himself has been made. *If only we can believe, and continue to believe, that this universe is not a godless universe;* but that there is at the center of things and in the midst of things One who thinks and feels and acts, whose mind is governed by similar laws to those that govern ours, whose heart craves love and whose spirit craves fellowship; then we can hope for recognition and need not despair on account of our littleness even amid the immensity of the universe. For "bigness is not greatness," nor is size always significant. *Evidently, persons are of more value than things;* and men and women into whom God has breathed the breath of His own life are of more importance to Him than countless worlds, the cunning workmanship of His fingers. *A personal God is supremely interested in persons. Surely children in His own image and likeness are more precious than moon and stars.* It is of them that His mind is full; upon them His heart is set; with them He yearns to dwell.

"For thou hast made him but little lower than the angels,
And crownest him with glory and honor.

Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;

Thou hast put all things under his feet."

Here David recalls how, in that wonderful poem of creation, the first chapter of Genesis, it

was recorded: "And God said, Let us make man in our own image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air," etc., etc., "and over all the earth." And so David sings, in echo of the first chapter of Genesis, of the dignity and destiny of man:

"Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands;

Thou hast put all things under his feet:

All sheep and oxen" (David was even now a shepherd ruling over sheep),

"Yea, and the beasts of the field" (perhaps David recalls how he bearded the lion and slew the bear);

"The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea,

Whatsoever passes through the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord,

How excellent is thy name in all the earth!"

This is the eighth Psalm, from which the writer of Hebrews quotes in chap. 2: 6-8, upon which quotation he proceeds to comment in vs. 8, 9. God did make man to have dominion. God did put all things in subjection under His feet "For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him" (v. 8). Yes, man was made to have dominion, and to rule over all created things. So says the Scripture. But, as we look about upon men and the condition of things to-day, we don't see men rulers over all things. We see them not rulers, not conquerors, not masters; but in many instances

and in many particulars cringing slaves; slaves of fear, slaves of appetite and passion, slaves in body, mind and spirit. Truly, as the writer of Hebrews says in v. 8, "*But now we see not yet all things subjected to him.*" A sad sight it is indeed, to see men and women, created in the image of God, created to rule, not even masters of themselves: to see them slaves of self, slaves of sin, slaves of their fellows.

"But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every man" (v. 9). While the race in general has fallen far short of its high dignity and destiny, one man of the race, Jesus of Nazareth, "the seed of the woman" that was to wound the serpent's head, has risen to the full height of man's privilege and prerogatives, has triumphed where others failed, and now sits crowned with glory and honor, the victorious representative of all those who through Him shall also overcome. *This was one of the great reasons why Christ partook of flesh and blood, in order that He might realize the manhood for which man had been created, and having realized it Himself might be able to help other men win a similar victory. Is not this a rational and worthy means to a glorious end? Could any other way have been more certain*

of success than this? This passage suggests three pictures for our present study:¹ man as God made him, man as sin has made him, man as he was revealed in the manhood of Jesus of Nazareth, a manhood to which each one of us may attain through faith in and fellowship with Him. The thought of the propitiatory purpose of Christ's death, which is touched upon here in the phrase, "tasting death for every man," and again in v. 17, "to make propitiation for the sins of the people," we shall reserve for study until we take up in detail in later chapters the whole subject of Christ's priesthood.

1. Let us consider *the man that God made*. Let us not accept this picture *unless it appeals to our spiritually and scripturally enlightened minds*. We have no other test of truth than our own minds enlightened by the Holy Spirit interpreting to us the Word of God. The human mind alone is not a sufficient test. The Bible alone is not a sufficient test. The Holy Spirit alone is not a sufficient test. But the mind of man enlightened by the book of God and led by the Spirit of God will lead us to truth. Let us not copy the spirit of the dogmatist, but "prove all things and hold fast that which is good." The first two chapters of Genesis present to us a picture of man as he was created. A world of beauty, harmony and peace

¹ Cf. F. B. Meyer on Hebrews in loco.

was made, and at the end of each period of creation "God saw that it was good." Creation proceeded on an ever ascending scale, from lower to higher, from the simple to the complex, from vegetable to lower animals, from creepers to quadrupeds. At each step God was pleased with the work of His hands. Finally, when all things had been made ready to serve and minister to him, man, the climax, the masterpiece of God, was formed and established as ruler over all. Does not this seem to be the plain teaching of the pictures in the first two chapters of Genesis? "And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him: male and female created he them. And God blessed them: and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion.' " Thus was man created in God's own image, and appointed to rule over the earth in God's stead.

But in what did this image and likeness to God consist? Did it consist in physical likeness to God, as the Mormons would have us believe? Are we to understand that God has eyes and ears, hands and feet, and a physical body that is like our own? Is this what it means when it says that man was created in the image and likeness of God? Or does it mean something infinitely deeper and nobler and higher than the merely physical? It would seem to mean that man's

likeness to God consisted in natural likeness to God, i. e., in the possession of personality; and in moral likeness to God, i. e., in the possession of holiness. Man was constituted a personal creature, and a holy person. Is any other animal a personal creature? Is the dog a person? Is the horse in the image and likeness of God? In what does personality consist? In the possession of certain faculties, intellect, affection, will; the ability to know one's self as related to the world and to God; and in the power to choose moral ends and to determine purposes in life. The horse or dog does not live according to any purpose in life. Men and women are the only personal creatures on earth, and they alone have been created in the image and likeness of God. Man was created not only in the natural likeness to God, but also in the moral likeness to Him. By his holiness, or moral likeness to God, "man was created with such a direction" (trend or tendency) "of his affections and will" as to make it natural, spontaneous, for him to love and serve God. Yet, with his holiness, he retained his personal freedom, had the power of contrary choice, and was liable to temptation, even as was the second Adam, the Christ of Nazareth. *Thus, in personality and holiness, in nature and in morality, was man created in the image and likeness of God.*

"And God said, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and

replenish the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion.''' Man was not only made in God's image, but also he was created to rule. He was constituted a king by divine right. He was God's own son, God's representative, God's vicegerent upon earth. "The sun to labor for him as a very Hercules, the moon to light his nights," and lead ocean's waters round the earth with cleansing tides, "the elements of nature to be his slaves and messengers, flowers to scent his path, fruits to please his taste, birds to sing for him, fish to feed him, beasts to toil for and carry him." Truly, his dignity and his destiny was an high one. *No other book gives us such an exalted and lofty conception of man as does the Bible, and yet, no other book paints so truly and vividly the deceitfulness and depravity of the unrenewed heart.* The idolater regards himself as inferior to beasts and birds and crawling things, and bows in reverence to worship them. The materialist thinks himself only flesh and blood, a mass of matter formed by the chance accumulation of unreasoning atoms. Some so-called scientists regard man as the offspring of the monkey, and feel rather sure that they can trace their own ancestry back to the brute. But the Bible, with its true conception of man as well as of God, rises above all of these misconceptions, and boldly declares man to be the child of a heavenly Father, created in His

image and after His likeness. Thus we behold the man that God made, in a world of beauty, harmony and peace, in which he himself is to be lord of all he surveys." He is surrounded with a magnificent palace yard, the Garden of Eden. He is to walk and talk with God in the most familiar way. His employment is to be of the most delightful kind, for God loves him too much to doom him to idleness. He is to trim the trees, train the flowers, and gather the fruits of the garden. His dominion is to be boundless; his rule to be absolute. He is to be king over all things. Nevertheless, there is to be one limitation to his power, one condition of his reign; his will must be subordinate to the will of the Almighty. So long as this shall continue, he will retain his almost sovereign position. But, alas, tempted by a rebel to distrust God's love and God's wisdom, man became uneasy under the sole limitation of his power: ambition was aroused; and, when promised that upon one act of disobedience his eyes should be opened, and he should become equal with God, man voluntarily stepped over the mark, raised his own will in rebellion against his Maker's, broke away from communion with his Father, and lost his crown.

2. This brings us secondly to the beginning of that sad history of *man as sin has made him*. No sooner does man sin than conscience makes him a coward. He was made to be a king, but with

sin in his heart unconfessed and unforgiven he becomes a coward. Yonder is that erstwhile sovereign man, hiding like a cringing slave "behind the trees of the garden from the Lord of the garden!" He is now no longer king. He has dethroned himself. His crown is rolling in the dust. Selfishness has now become the supreme rule of existence; the soul has lost communion with the source of its life; the holy nature has become tainted and perverted; affections are corrupted, intellect blinded, will fettered. Now he finds it easier to sin than to do right, for self has become his God. He has begun the downward path, and down, down, down, he goes, at a terrific rate. Fallen man begets children in his own fallen likeness, and hands down his corrupted nature and perverted disposition to his descendants. Unless your theology squares with the facts, we will have none of it. *Human nature as we know it to-day is a tainted stream*; it is a Mississippi River below St. Louis; there are two streams there mingling with each other, the clear Mississippi and the muddy Missouri. So is the river of life. Heredity is neither an unmixed good, nor an unmixed evil. We have all of us received from our ancestors both good and evil. We do our sainted dear ones no wrong when we recognize that we received from them, not only many tendencies for which we should be always grateful, but also certain traits and tendencies

from which we could well have been spared. As loving parents watch their children develop both good and evil traits, they are usually conscious as to the source of both. So when man sinned, the holy nature became tainted and perverted. Fallen man begets children in his own fallen likeness, and hands down his corrupted nature and perverted disposition to his descendants. Fear, jealousy, hate, soon take possession of man, and the deteriorating process is hastened by his own multiplied and multiplying sins. Cain kills Abel, and his sin reacts upon himself and still further debases his own character. So low does man become, so much a slave of his guilty self, that we soon see this one-time monarch, this one made for dominion, bowing down in worship before the weakest and lowest creatures of his kingdom.

The sad history of idolatry has made it clear that there is nothing in all the creation, God's purposed kingdom for man, to which this sin-cursed man has not paid homage. He has worshiped at one time or another all created things, from the stars that stud the skies to the stones that are strewn along the path of his pilgrimage. In Egypt he has worshiped not only the sun in the heavens, but the frogs and flies and serpents of the earth. So that the satirist Juvenal said in the days of ancient Rome, "Who knows not what kind of omens the mad Egyptian worships? One district adores a crocodile; another grows

pale before an ibis glutted with snakes; the golden image of the sacred ape shines afar; here whole towns worship cats; there fishes of the Nile; yonder a dog. It is a crime to pull or eat a leek or an onion. O Holy Nation, whose gods grow in gardens" (15th satire). Here man has consecrated a temple to the sacred bull, while yonder he kisses the dust in reverence before a golden calf. He trembles as a suppliant before "sticks and stones and worse than senseless things." *In many parts of the world idolatry is still rampant in various forms.* One might have thought from many of the papers read at the world's congress of religions that all real idolatry had ceased, and that even the supposed heathen religions were only different forms of worship of the one true and living God. But a world's congress of religions needed to be supplemented by a world's congress of nations. Let one go around the world with Dr. John Henry Barrows, after the world's congress of religions, and see these religions at work; and then, "By their fruits ye shall know them." Go with him to Benares, the ancient and sacred seat and center of Buddhism, and watch the devout followers of Buddhism in the monkey temple or in the cow temple. "By their fruits ye shall know them." See yonder Buddhists bowing down in the filth and mire of those Augean stables to kiss the foul tails of those sacred white cows which, as Dr. Barrows says,

"stalk about conscious of their own divinity." Go and see for yourself heathenism and idolatry in its awful nakedness and filth; and then you will not reject the pure, lofty, clear-thinking and practical living of Jesus Christ for the theosophical mysticism or baptized Buddhism of Asia, however beautifully indefinite its philosophy may be. Nor is idolatry a thing of the past even in our own land. Sometimes we hold up our hands in horror and tell with bated breath the children of our Sunday-school class about the awful idolatry of the children of Israel who had been so wondrously blessed of God, and yet turned from Him to worship a golden calf. They had just come out of a country where the worship of the sacred bull was a constant custom. Amid the terrors and superstitions of an awful wilderness they had made a calf of gold. It was indeed awful idolatry. *But which is worse?* for the children of Israel, in the early twilight of revelation and civilization, to bow down to a golden calf; or for men and women, living at the dawn of the twentieth century of the year of our Lord, with all the enlightenment of ages of progress, to bow down and become the abject slaves of the gods of custom and society or some modern calf of gold? It will surely be more tolerable for those of olden time in that day than for these. *Let us not suppose that idolatry is past, though it may have changed its form.* Even to-day it must be said of

many that man is still a slave of fear and remorse, of appetite and passion, of drinks and drugs, of society and custom.

The image of God, in which he was created, has not been lost; but it has been sadly marred and scarred by sin and selfishness. Man is a lost sheep, afar off on the mountains, away from the shepherd's fold. He is a lost coin, still valuable, stamped with the image and superscription of the king; but lost to its highest usefulness and missing the very purpose of its existence. He is a lost son; still a son of his Father, but a prodigal son, his will in rebellion against his Father's will, and his life deprived of the blessings and privileges of the home-life. Yes, he is lost, *lost*, LOST. Nevertheless, he is capable of redemption; for he still possesses personality and a moral nature, however much that moral nature may have been warped and weakened by sin and selfishness. In order that lost man might be redeemed Christ was for a time lower than angels.

Some months ago when reading again that fascinating story by Parkman, "The History of the Jesuits in North America," the author came across the incident of that poor Sister who became insane over her religion in the early days of Villemarie. It was her frequent custom to go out into the mission-compound and talk to the chickens. Seizing them one by one, she would ask, "Have you made your peace with

God?" and when no intelligent answer was given she would wring the chicken's neck. They said that she was insane. But no member of the human race ever got so low, or ever became so weak, or so lost, that you and I would be insane, or be acting unreasonably, to pray for them, and work for them, and ask them, "Have you made your peace with God?" *That is the difference between a chicken and a man.* Man has been made in the image and likeness of God. His natural likeness, in the possession of personality and a moral nature, he retains in spite of his sin and selfishness. His spiritual or moral likeness to God has been lost through disobedience to the laws of life and through his shame. He is living as an alien and a stranger. He needs to be reconciled to his Father. Fellowship with the Father may again be established through faith in the work and worth of the Lord Jesus Christ. "As many as received him to them gave he the right to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on his name." But never does any soul get so far away from God, so steeped in sin and saturated with selfishness, but that you and I can afford earnestly and persuasively to ask the question, "Have you made your peace with God?" and can honestly pray and hope that he will come to his senses and say, "I will arise and go to my Father."

3. Let us note now thirdly and lastly *man as*

Christ revealed manhood, a manhood to which each one of us may attain through faith in and fellowship with Him. Christ came not only to reveal to us the Father, but to reveal us to ourselves. He came to show us what real manhood meant; what man might have been; and what a man may yet attain through faith in Him. In Christ manhood was at its maximum, and the ancient ideal was fully realized in every particular. He was pre-eminently *the man*, the Son of Man, the perfect man; the only member of the human race in whom has been manifested the complete idea of humanity. *He must forever stand at the very apex of mankind.* No improvement can ever be made upon Him. In Him, we find every virtue carried to its highest excellence; in Him, we find no vice, even in its lightest form. The verdict of all who carefully scrutinize His character must be but a re-echoing of the judgment of Pilate, "I find no fault in him." You may take any other very good man, with the most distinguished heredity, with the strongest and sweetest character, with the most auspicious environment, and, through the education of life, books, and communion with God and man, you may develop him, through centuries, to the very highest point of excellence, and in this wonderful man you'll not find any virtue, any excellence of character, that you do not find in the man of Galilee. Christ pos-

sessed and combined, in the most remarkable way, "every grace and every virtue which human nature ever has displayed, or ever will display, in the course of its universal development. Matchless beauty, spotless purity, stainless splendor, strength with gentleness, courage with tenderness, charity with righteousness"; the lowliest and yet the lordliest, the meekest and yet the mightiest of men. He realized in His life what the first Adam and his descendants, through sin, failed to realize. He manifested God's image and God's likeness everywhere. He was sovereign in all His commands. He was king over Himself, over nature, over all created things. In every way He trod the earth as a conqueror; and now, as victorious man, as well as Son of God, He sits crowned with glory and honor. The first man, Adam, believed the lie of the devil, and lost his crown. The second man, Christ, obeyed at every point the will of His Father, and now sits enthroned in His glorified humanity. The first man, Adam, aspired through disobedience to equality with God, and lost his earthly kingdom. The second man, Christ, stooped down from an heavenly throne, took upon Himself humanity, partook of flesh and blood, lived a perfect and obedient life as a Son, as a man; and now, as man's representative He sits crowned. As Paul tells us in Philippians, "Being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient

unto death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God hath highly exalted him."

Yes, Christ has triumphed, and is crowned; but only as a first fruits, as the captain of our salvation, as the leader "of many sons to glory," as the "first among many brethren." He, the victorious man, offers to help us win a similar victory. "As many as received him, to them gave he the power" (the right) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." There is only one way by which the dignity and destiny of man may again be realized, and that is through faith in Him. If we join our lives with His, and let Him live in and through us, we shall surely win. We shall be "more than conquerors through him that loved us." Through fellowship with Him, it may be true of each one of us, that there is no sin or sinful tendency which we may not overcome, and no virtue or excellence to which we may not attain. The progress may seem slow, and the attainment distant. We shall need to exercise patience with ourselves, and patience with each other, but the outcome cannot be doubtful. *The main thing now is, are we tending in the right direction?* Is your life, is my life, a victorious life? Are we becoming more and more like our Master? Which is it in your case? in my-case? Conqueror or conquered? Victor or victim? Is the life getting sweeter, the character stronger; are the purposes higher? If

so, then we may take courage; for through Him we shall surely conquer. We shall see Him as He is. Yes, we shall be like Him.

But perhaps some one may read this who is living without the conscious help of such a Saviour; some one who feels himself or herself being more and more overcome by evil; who realizes that the divine image and likeness have been sadly soiled and scarred by sin and selfishness; who finds each year less joy, less power, less of a hold on life, less of victory. Is it worth the while to live in this way when a larger and a better life is possible even here and now? *How much outlay you are making! How little return! Is it worth while?* Will you not now, at once, give up your own unaided and fruitless efforts after truest and best manhood and womanhood, and take Christ as your best helper, your Saviour and friend? He knows all of your trials. He is thoroughly fitted to be your Saviour. He has been tempted and tried in all points as you and has triumphed. Now as victorious man, as well as the Son of God, He sits at the right hand of the throne of the Father, able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God through Him. Accept Him as your Saviour and friend now, and at once you'll begin to overcome. You must stoop to conquer, but He'll crown you at the last. What marvelous possibilities for good are in your life! *What a wonderful transformation God can*

work in any life which is yielded up to Him! The possibilities of a life have been well illustrated by the history of an old silk rag. Yonder is a rag-picker, going up and down the streets and lanes of the city, picking up rags and pieces of paper, which she carelessly thrusts into a dirty-looking bag. Thus she spends many weary hours of the day. But now she sees something which specially arouses her interest. It's soiled and dirty, half buried in an ash heap. It looks like the commonest sort of a cast-off rag. But she picks it up with the greatest interest; carefully smoothes it over her knee; and, instead of thrusting it carelessly into the junk bag, she carefully puts it into her pocket. It isn't worth much. It's only a dirty rag. *But it's silk!* The rag-picker takes it to the broker and gets perhaps a penny for it; the broker sends it with other silk rags, to the paper mills at Eau Claire, where the finest of fine paper is made from it. It's now worth perhaps fifteen cents. Then the government sends to Eau Claire an order for some extra fine paper; the paper is sent on to Washington, and is stamped, and the old rag now becomes a government bond of immense worth. *The rag was silk!*

Human nature, though soiled and stained and scarred by sin and selfishness, is silk, soiled silk. Your life, with its manhood or womanhood well-nigh destroyed by your own sin and selfishness,

is yet like this soiled silk, because of its immense possibilities. Even yet, my friend, if you'll give your soiled and scarred life into the hands of the world's great Redeemer, He'll purge you from your impurities, He'll renew your heart, He'll lead you, develop you, train you and enlarge you through time and throughout eternity, until there shall be no virtue which you shall not realize, and no height which you may not reach. May God help each one of us in this training-school of life to realize our own need of the victorious man as guide and friend, as well as Son of God and Saviour; and through Him and His help may we realize that for which we were made and to which our heavenly Father would lead us, to help us accomplish which Christ became for a time "lower than the angels."

Perfect Through Suffering



Chapter II, verse 10.

IN chap. 2: 10, which is to be the subject of our study to-day, the writer of Hebrews is *still accounting for the lowly human life of the Son of God, and His shameful death upon the cross.* He has already shown us in chap. 2: v. 5-9 that not angels but glorified man is to occupy the position of privilege and power in the Messianic age. God made man in His own image and likeness, and made him to rule; and, though man through his sin, shortsightedness and selfishness has missed much of his high dignity and destiny, yet the great and gracious God is not content that he should be permanently defeated. He has therefore sent His Son as a man into the world, for a little time lower than the angels by reason of the suffering of death, to show us manhood at its maximum, and through His life and death and the power of His priestly position at the right hand of God to help every man attain a similar victory. In order that man might be able to find at all times in the ideal man, Christ Jesus, a

merciful and faithful high-priestly Saviour and friend, God, by His grace, sent His Son to live a human life in the midst of the trials and sorrows of human life, and "to taste death for every man." "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering" (chap. 2: 10). "*It became him,*" it seemed fitting to God, it commended itself to Him; to Him "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things," to Him who had all power and all resources, and before whom were all possible plans of salvation; it seemed good to Him in the process of "bringing many sons to glory"—He wanted more sons like Jesus Christ, and His object was to bring these sons to glory—it seemed good to Him "to make the captain" (or author) "of their salvation perfect through suffering"; not perfect in the sense of being made free from fault or flaw, free from sin, for Christ was absolutely and always sinless; but perfect in the sense of having been thus perfectly fitted to do His work as a sympathizing Saviour, and as High Priest for humanity.

If we are to believe that God is a God of love, and that He yearns with an infinite compassion over the human race and earnestly desires the salvation of every member of the race; then it would seem that we must believe that if there

had been any other plan of salvation possible for the divine mind, by the adoption of which one single soul more should ultimately be saved than shall ultimately be saved by the work and worth of the Lord Jesus Christ, our heavenly Father would have adopted that plan. This would seem to be an inevitable conclusion. Let us repeat it. *If the Almighty could have adopted any other plan of salvation, by the adoption of which one single soul more should have been saved than shall ultimately be saved by the worth and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, our loving heavenly Father would surely have adopted that plan.* But among all of the plans of salvation, which suggested themselves to His infinite mind, the one which He chose was, all things considered, the very best possible one. His burning desire was to have more sons like Jesus, more people whose earnest desire it would be "to be about the Father's business," whose wills would be in perfect harmony with His own Will, and who should "do always those things which please Him." That He might get to Himself these sons, and might bring them to glory, "it seemed best to Him to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." In other words, to God, who had boundless resources, the path of suffering seemed to commend itself as the best possible way by which Christ should become fully fitted to be the Captain of salvation for a sinful and

suffering world. This verse, then, brings strikingly before our minds the thought of fellow-suffering as the real basis of sympathy, and sympathy as the true basis of helpfulness, about which I wish now to say a few things.

1. *Fellow-suffering is the longest line of human sympathy.* We do not know what binds angels to each other; and few of us care. We are far from being angels and are not so very much interested in them. But whatever has to do with men and women is intensely interesting to us. Among men and women the longest line of sympathy is fellow-suffering. Blood relationship is usually a strong basis of sympathy. People born of common parents generally have a fellow-feeling one for another, have an interest in and sympathy for each other. Brother sympathizes with brother, and relative with relative. The basis of this sympathy is this blood-relationship, but this is a very short line and small circle of sympathy, embracing only a few individuals at the most. In a neighboring town there is a case where one member of a family has not even spoken to another member of the family for ten years; but this is unnatural, inhuman, devilish. Generally brother is interested in and sympathizes with brother, and relative with relative. Again, persons of the same circle in society, of kindred tastes, of similar professions or occupations, or of similar religious persuasion, have a

mutual interest in and sympathy for each other. Doctors are interested in doctors, lawyers in lawyers, etc. This is a sympathy based upon social, professional or religious relationship, and is a still longer line of sympathy than that of family ties, embracing a much larger circle of people. Again, people born in the same city or state, or who are citizens of the same great nation, usually have a fellow-feeling for one another, have sympathy with each other. This fellow-feeling, based upon civic or national lines, may not always be so very prominent in one's thinking, but may lie dormant until some unusual occasion brings it into consciousness. When one has been away from home for months or years, and then meets some one from the homeland, how this basis of sympathy comes at once to the front! As the author travels from state to state people greet him sympathetically with the remark, "Oh, you are from Ohio. I was born in Ohio. I felt interested in you at once." So when one is abroad, and has not seen anybody "from the States" for months, any American becomes at once a friend. The basis of this keen sympathy is national or civic lines. It is a long line of human sympathy embracing in our land over seventy-six million people. But there is yet a still longer line of human sympathy, based not upon family ties, nor upon social, professional, or religious relationship, nor upon civic or

national kinship; but based upon fellow-suffering. *When "Jesus wept" He spoke a universal tongue. Everybody understands the language of tears.* The Chinaman and the Italian may not understand a word of each other's language, but they will not fail to understand the tear that trickles down the cheek. Ever since sin entered the world by man's voluntary transgression, one lot has been the common experience of all members of the race. We are all of us sinners, and all of us sufferers. The world is full of sin, and filled with suffering; and because this is so, *suffering makes the whole world kin.*

And so when the great God, yearning over fallen and falling men, determined to send His own Son to be the Captain of their salvation, in order that the Christ might be most intimately and closely related to every member of a suffering race, in order that the Christ might get a strong hold upon men, it seemed good to Him, "for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." Had Christ lived among men as an earthly king, surrounded with all the pomp and pride of power and separated from suffering and want, it would doubtless have seemed more in accord with divine position and prerogative, more in accord with the wonderful things declared in the first chapter of Hebrews to be true of Him,

but He would not in that case have been the Christ for you and for me. Far off from our wants and woes, with no sufferings or sorrows or trials, He would not have had real fellow-feeling or sympathy with us, and without sympathy with us, He could not help us; for fellow-suffering is the true basis of sympathy, and sympathy is the real basis of helpfulness. Both the Latin word, compassion, and the Greek word, sympathy, mean to suffer with. This putting of one's self in the other man's place, and suffering with him, in order truly to sympathize with him, in order to help him, is one of the ideas that have made the Salvation Army so successful in many places. This is also one of the motives in the University Settlement movement. We may say it reverently that it would seem as if *God Himself could not have saved humanity from the heights of heaven*, but must have come down to earth and in the person of His Son put Himself in man's place in order that through an experience of man's sorrows and trials He might be thoroughly fitted to be man's sympathetic Saviour. "Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (2: 17-18). Had Christ

lived in the so-called middle class of society, experiencing its comforts and trials, He would have been able to sympathize with and help them, and all more favored than they; but He would hardly have been able to help those who were at the bottom of the social ladder, whose sufferings and trials were so numerous and so heavy. But, when the great Son of God, Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, King; when He who was the outshining of God's glory, and the very image of His substance; when He who made and will dissolve the worlds, He who shall sit at God's right hand, until His enemies shall be made the footstool of His feet; when He was born into our suffering world, of humble and poor parentage, taking upon Himself the form of a servant, living a life of suffering and dying a death of shame, "borrowing a cradle from the cattle, and a grave from a friend"; *then God's love and God's wisdom were manifested in making the Captain of our salvation perfect through suffering.*

During recent years many of us have become acquainted with the wonderful pictures of J. James Tissot, who has produced what many art critics have pronounced to be "the most marvelous series of paintings of the Christ-life yet put upon canvas." Do you recall what it was that changed J. James Tissot from a painter of the rather sensuous pictures that adorn French salons to the producer of this wonderful series of

Christ pictures? J. James Tissot was on the verge of a severe illness. He had gone to the cathedral, to Notre Dame, to worship; while there he was taken down with a fever, in the midst of which he had what appeared to be a vision which was to change entirely the rest of his life. When he recovered from his illness, his first thought, artist-like, was to reproduce upon canvas his transforming vision. The vision was this: there was a large building wrecked by the ravage of war; through its side a great rent had been made by the crush of the cannon ball; a large beam from the roof had fallen across the middle of the room, the floor of which was covered with the debris of destruction; upon the beam amid the ruins were seated a broken-hearted peasant couple, who had evidently lost home and children and all during the terrible war. Sitting there disconsolate amid the ruins of the past, they are evidently asking themselves Mallock's question, "Is life worth living?" They feel just as many of earth's sorrowing ones have felt when they have returned from the cemetery to the empty and broken home. As long as the body of the dear one lay yet in the house, it was not quite so hard. But, when the dear one had been laid away in the cold, cold ground, and the loved ones returned again to the house to take up anew life's duties and responsibilities, how hollow and empty the home seemed! How many

times the question came up, "Can I ever get accustomed to it? *Can I ever have courage to take up life again?*" So evidently the peasant couple felt amid the ruins of the past; for weary and broken-hearted they sat upon the beam, the woman's face buried in her apron, the man's face buried in his hands. But look! yonder comes a man down the highway. He, too, has known sorrow and woe. He walks bravely, but carries a heavy heart. As he approaches it is evident that *he is a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*. There are blood stains upon his brow, and nail prints in his hands. It is evident that he, too, has passed through great trial. When he comes opposite the broken building, he stops and enters. Seeing the broken-hearted couple sitting there amid the ruins of better days, he goes to them, and seating himself by their side, he lays his weary head upon the shoulder of the man and says encouragingly, "Be brave, man. I have suffered too; even more than you. I will help you." That was the vision which changed Tissot, and drew him to the story of the Christ. It may be that he never saw Heb. 2: 10, yet it must remind us all of its thought: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation *perfect through suffering*."

2. Again, let us note that *suffering, like joy, is*

limited by capacity. Some people have more capacity for sorrow or joy than other people. Some persons live a sort of negative, passive existence, on a dead level like a plain, with few mountain peaks of exaltation and lofty joy, and few valleys of depression or deep pain. Some people suffer less than others, because of having less capacity for suffering. Other people have a large, full, receptive nature, capable of rarest, purest delight, and also capable of deepest, darkest trial and suffering. When we think, then, of Heb. 2: 10 and of our Saviour being perfected through suffering, we must always bear in mind the largeness of His capacity. Capacity, both for sorrow and joy, was at its maximum in Christ. He was in the largest and fullest sense *a man*, every inch a *man*, pre-eminently the Son of Man. No one else on earth could know the height and purity of His lofty joy, for no one else on earth had such a capacity for gladness as He; no one else on earth could know the depth and awfulness of His dark sorrows, for no one else had such a finely strung and sensitive soul. You and I will never experience down here the highest altitudes of "the joy of the Lord," because we have not yet the capacity to receive them; nor will you and I *ever*—and there is great comfort in this thought if you grasp it—nor will you and I *ever* (for there'll be no sorrow there) be called to pass through shadows and sorrows as deep as those

which He experienced, because our souls, with their limited capacities, cannot fathom such abysmal depths. However much any one of us may have suffered in the past, or may be suffering now in body, mind or estate, or may suffer yet in the future, *it will always be true that our Saviour has suffered more than we*, and has been perfected through suffering to be our sympathetic and helpful Saviour. Our joys, compared with His joys, are like starlight compared with the glow of the noon-tide sun; our trials and sorrows are unto His trials and sorrows as twilight shades to midnight gloom.

3. Again, *we must keep in mind when we study Heb. 2: 10 the reality of Christ's humanity*. Christ was a real man. There seems to be a tendency in human thinking to swing like a pendulum from one extreme to the other on this subject. Sometimes men have made so much of the divinity of Christ as to have forgotten His humanity. Sometimes they have made so much of His humanity as to have forgotten His divinity. The tendency in the older theology was to over-emphasize the divinity of Christ to the obscuration of His genuine humanity. The tendency of much of the newer theology is to over-emphasize the humanity of Christ to the neglect of His divinity. Both he who has only a human Christ and he who has only a divine Christ are to be pitied, while he who has the

divino-human Christ is to be cordially congratulated. Some people seem to find it hard to accept in their thinking the Christ of the Gospels, who is really God and yet truly man. Some people seem to find it hard to take the Christ as the Bible writers and history found Him. *We may not be able to understand how He was both God and man, but we can accept Him as such.* We may not be able to dissect and analyze His life, pigeon-holing every word, and thought, and deed, saying, "He did this as God," and, "He did or said this as man." Unable to understand Him, we will not cease to love Him. We may not be able to understand the reason for nor the nature of the sweet love and devotion of parent or wife or child, but we shall not be wise in doubting it, or in rejecting it. We may find in Christ the ideal man. We may rest in Christ as the true representation of God, God manifested in the flesh. Nothing that is ideal or desirable in man do we fail to find in Him; no thought of God that He does not satisfy.

"Through Him the first fond prayers are said
 Our lips of childhood frame,
 The last low whispers of our dead
 Are burdened with His name.

"O Lord and Master of us all!
 Whate'er our name or sign,
 We own Thy sway, we hear Thy call,
 We test our lives by Thine.

"We faintly hear, we dimly see,
In differing phrase we pray;
But, dim or clear, we own in Thee
The Light, the Truth, the Way!"

One of the great arguments for the faithfulness and trustworthiness of the Gospel narrators is that they record the facts both of His humanity and of His divinity without any attempt to explain or reconcile them. *His divinity and His humanity were both of them real and genuine, and were often manifested side by side in a very striking way.*¹ For instance, Christ, after a hard day's work of teaching and healing in Capernaum, desires quiet and rest, and asks the disciples to get a boat and push out upon the lake. The disciples do so, and Christ lies down, tired and weary, upon a pillow in the stern of the boat. Soon He is fast asleep, so soundly asleep as not to be disturbed by the tossing of the boat, or by the storm that is now raging; so soundly asleep that it is necessary roughly to shake Him, in order to arouse Him. It is the deep sleep of a weary man. But now, as the disciples wake Him with the troubled cry, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Christ arises from His sleep, rebukes the storm, and commands the troubled elements, "Peace, be still." "And there was a great calm." The disciples were amazed, and doubtless felt, "It's the voice of God!" Again, we see

¹ Cf. Stalker's "Trial and Death of Jesus Christ."

this Christ at the tomb of a friend, and amid the grief and sadness of the scene, "Jesus wept." They are the tears of a man. And then, in a few moments, we hear Him as He stands before the rock tomb of His dead friends and cries, "Lazarus, come forth"; and, at the call of God, the dead awakes. Ah, yes! He was both God and man; and you and I will lose much of the sweet helpfulness of the Christ of the Gospels, if we minimize in our thinking either His divinity or His humanity.

In thinking, then, of Heb. 2: 10, Christ made perfect through suffering, let us remember at all times the reality of His humanity. Let us always remember that Christ had a human body, that He was born of a woman, that He grew in wisdom and stature as other men, that He was hungry and thirsty and weary, feeling the same kind of hunger and thirst and weariness that you and I feel. Bear in mind that He needed rest and sleep, that He was susceptible to physical suffering and pain, that He "sweat, as it were, great drops of blood falling down to the ground," that He fainted beneath the cross, was scourged and crucified, died and was buried. *Bear in mind that He had a rational nature*, that He was subject to temptation, that He had emotions of joy and grief, that He felt compassion and had displeasure, that He needed and practiced prayer. *Above all things, in this connection remember His*

sorrows and His troubles. Indeed, "He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"; He had sorrows in His own life, and was familiar with the woes of others: grief, from the bereavement of death; grief, from the unfaithfulness of His dearest friends; grief, from the treachery of one who sat at meat with Him; grief, from the vicious and unrelenting hate which followed Him everywhere from those who should have been His friends; grief, from seeing the wickedness of the wicked, and knowing the certainty of their doom; grief, from realizing His helplessness to save those who would not come to Him that they might be saved. How little we realize the certainty and awfulness of the doom of the impenitent! To Him who saw clearly the end from the beginning what a burden it must have been! No wonder that with a breaking heart he cried out, "How often would I, but ye would not." Surely no one ever carried a greater load of grief than He! So true is this that even among millions of a suffering race, when one speaks of "the man of sorrows," no one ever thinks of anybody else than of Jesus of Nazareth. He was *par excellence* "the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." Surely the Captain of our salvation was made "perfect through suffering."

4. And yet, though perfectly fitted to be our sympathizing Saviour, *many live and die without the abiding consciousness of His helpfulness.* Some

months ago, in one of our cities, a burdened one opened her heart to the author and told him her sorrow. She was a hunchback girl, and felt lonely and hungry for companionship. "You know," she said to the man in the wheel-chair, "how my heart aches; I'm so lonely! I tell you this because I feel sure that you in your physical condition will understand my meaning. There are times when Jesus don't seem to help me any, and they too are the times when I need Him most. You know, I'm sure, what I mean. I get so lonely! I feel so much alone in the world! The hunch on my back separates me from everybody else; even my own mother don't understand me. No one knows my peculiar trials and troubles. *I am, at times, so much alone; even Jesus is not company for me.*" The author understood her meaning fairly well, but in order still further to draw her out he asked, "How is it that Jesus can't help you any at such times as these?" "Ah," said she, "Jesus didn't have any hunch on His back, did He? He never knew how it felt to be so much alone in the world, did He?" Then I began to tell her again the story of Jesus. I tried to tell her of His glory with the Father before the worlds were; of the purity and sweet companionship of heaven; of the society of the angels; of how Jesus so loved us that He left all of these things and came down to earth to die for us. I told her how coldly He

was received; how, when He made known in His home town His friendly and merciful mission, His fellow citizens took Him out to the edge of a precipice and wished to hurl Him headlong to destruction. I told her of His rejection by Capernaum and Gadara, by Samaria and Judea; how "He came unto His own and His own received Him not"; how He wept over Jerusalem because of her hard-heartedness; how He was misunderstood by friend and foe; how He could not make known the deepest thoughts of His heart, because the people of earth were not able to receive them; how even His disciples had constantly materialistic and selfish thoughts, while He was speaking to them of spiritual things. I told her of the far remove between His sinless soul and the best thoughts of earth's purest ones. I pictured forth His natural sociability and His lack of congenial companions, His loneliness when He cried, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head"; for humanity had shut its doors and its heart against Him. And then I told her of Gethsemane and those trying hours; how He took the eleven with Him into the garden (one of His twelve most intimate followers was even now selling Him for thirty pieces of silver). I told her how He longed to have friends near Him in the hours of struggle; how, feeling perhaps their lack of sym-

pathy, He left the eleven and taking the three, Peter, James and John, went still further into the garden; how, leaving even the three, He went alone into the deeper gloom, and fell headlong on the ground and agonized. The loneliness and struggle of those hours, who can picture! And then He returned to His friends for sympathy and help. *Were they watching and sharing His sorrow?* Ah, no; they were fast asleep. *He was alone in His trouble.* Do you not recall Tissot's picture of the garden scene? The three disciples, wrapped in their garments, are asleep under the shadow of a great rock; Jesus returning from the deeper gloom, leans heavily upon the rock, and, with a look of infinite pain and disappointment asks the drowsy disciples, "Could you not watch with me one hour? Not one hour?" Were they watching with Him and sharing His sorrow? Ah, no; they were heavy with sleep. He was alone in His troubles. Then I tried to tell the hunchback girl of Jesus' arrest, and how all forsook Him and fled. I told her of His trial and scourging and cruel mocking; and how, when He hung upon the cross, the gloom seemed so dark and awful that even the face of God seemed to be hidden from Him, and He cried out in His terrible loneliness and woe, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?" Then, turning to the hunchback girl, I said, "*Do you think that you ever felt as lonesome as the Son of*

heaven felt among the sons of earth? Did you ever feel more alone on earth than Jesus? Don't you think that Jesus can sympathize with you and help you, even when you get so lonesome?" "Oh," said she, "I had never seen it in that way before. Yes, surely, He knows how to help me, and I shall turn to Him with full confidence now, even when I get so lonesome." Then again the thought of Heb. 2:10 came to the author's mind: "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation *perfect through suffering*."

5. Again, we must remember that *this sympathizing Jesus is just the same to-day as of old*. Many lose sight of this point, and bound the humanity of Jesus by Bethlehem and Bethany. But this does not seem to be the teaching of Scripture. When He ascended on high, He did not lay aside His humanity, His capacity for sympathy, His human fellow-feeling; for the Christ who sits to-day on the right hand of the Majesty on high is the glorified God-Man, Christ Jesus. His perfect humanity has been crowned and glorified, but not given up. He is still "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day and forever." "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." We still "*have a great high priest who hath passed through the heavens*"; "not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of

our infirmities, but one who was in all points tempted like as we are." "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." The Christ in heaven is yet "a lamb as it had been slain." In His exaltation He does not forget the experiences of His humiliation. He is now "the captain of our salvation perfect through suffering."

6. It follows, then, from these considerations, that *the reason why many have rejected Christ is just the reason why they should accept Him.* The Jews rejected Christ because of the lowliness of His life, because He refused to live as kings usually live. A royal Messiah they were ready to crown, but a suffering Messiah they hastened to crucify. Had Jesus on Palm Sunday come into Jerusalem on a charging war-horse and as a military conqueror, the result would doubtless have been different from what it was, when He came into Jerusalem upon a humble beast of burden, and as the Prince of Peace. If Jesus of Nazareth had been willing to have yielded to the Tempter's proposition, if He had consented to become a popular Messiah, a great wonder-worker and earthly king, the leader of a revolution against Rome; His temporary success would probably have been wonderful. What the false prophet, Mahomet, accomplished a few centuries later among a similar people is evidence of what Jesus might have done, if only He had been willing to

put policy in place of principle, and men's desires in place of the Father's will. But He spurned with all the strength of His righteous nature such a base course. He came as the suffering Servant of Jehovah, to work out for man a more enduring redemption. The Man of Sorrows was not to the Jews' liking, although it was through these very sorrows that He was perfectly fitted to meet their need. Paul found that a crucified Christ was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness"; and yet, after all, He was "the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation" to all who believe; for it seemed best "to him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." Moreover to-day there are some who reject the divine Christ because of His human sufferings; and yet these very sufferings were endured that He might the more fully identify Himself with those whom He came to save, and by sympathizing with them help them.

7. In conclusion, let us note this specially helpful truth: *As Christ through His sufferings became the better fitted to be our sympathizing and helpful Saviour, so we through our sufferings, be they in body, mind or estate, may become the better fitted to be helpful to our suffering fellows.* It is only those, who themselves have really suffered, who can have the

truest and deepest sympathy with those who suffer. If, when troubles of various kinds come—and sooner or later in one form or another they come to us all—instead of inquiring too closely into their origin or cause, we shall inquire into their effect, it will help us all; not to ask, “Why did this come to me?” but rather, “*O Father, teach me what I may learn of sympathy and helpfulness out of this experience.*” This will take the sting out of sorrow, and give the victory over pain. If you have recently lost your child, you may by this experience be fitted pre-eminently to help some other one in a similar trial. Through your own woe you may become a queen of comfort. If you have recently failed in business, you will find ninety other business men out of one hundred who need at some time or other the help and sympathy which you alone can give. This is one of the most precious of the many gracious compensations which may come to every one who in any way is called to suffer that—in addition to the lessons of patience and faith which it is his high privilege to learn; in addition to the deeper appreciation of the sufferings, sympathy, companionship and promises of the Saviour, which it is his blessed lot to have; in addition to the purifying and strengthening of his own character, which the submissive, cheerful and Christian endurance of trials and suffering always brings about—in addition to all

these blessings, he who suffers may gain, if he will, from his own sufferings an enlarged capacity for sympathy with and helpfulness to others. *What a privilege it is* for the suffering ones of earth, by living cheerful, courageous lives in the midst of many shadows, to be able to cheer, comfort and help others in their trials! This thought was evidently in the mind of Paul, that happy, thankful Christian of many perils and much suffering, when he exclaimed in the opening chapter of his second letter to the Corinthians: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." And so, O burdened one, do not be cast down by your trials, but find refuge in the Captain of your salvation, who was made perfect through suffering. Let us not allow our sorrows and sufferings to harden us, but rather may they increase our capacity for sympathy and helpfulness, and send us out to cheer and comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves have been comforted of God.

Our Brother; the Death of Death



Chapter II, verses 11-18.

THUS far in this wonderful passage, chap. 2: 5-18, which we are studying, the writer of Hebrews has shown the moral fitness and great necessity of the humanity of Christ, in that it was through an actual experience of human life and death that the Christ was thoroughly fitted to do His merciful and faithful high-priestly work for a sinning and a suffering race. It has ever been God's great and gracious purpose that man, created in His image and likeness and created to rule, should realize the high dignity and destiny for which he was made. Though man in general has fallen far short of his privilege, one man of the race, Jesus of Nazareth, has triumphed. Though for a time lower than angels in that He suffered death, His humiliation was only temporary. Now He sits crowned, able to save every man who will come to Him. Don't be disturbed, O Jew, at the thought of Christ's

humanity, sufferings and death. They were necessary in the carrying out of God's gracious purpose to provide salvation for all, for it seemed highly fitting that the infinite God should make the Captain of salvation perfect through suffering to be our sympathetic and helpful Saviour. *Jesus did not stand aloof from those whom He came to save, but identified Himself with them in the closest manner, even to calling them His brethren.* "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children that God hath given me" (vs. 11-13).

These were the best passages in the Old Testament at the disposal of the writer, by the quoting of which the close relation between the Messiah and those whom He came to save could be proved. If we to-day, however, wished to show the marvelous identification of Christ with those whom He came to save, we should more effectively turn to the words of Jesus Himself as recorded in the Gospels. For instance, we should turn to such a passage as Matt. 12:46-50. You recall at once the circumstances under which these words were spoken. It was while Jesus was still quite popular with the people in

Galilee, though the opposition of the Pharisees was daily growing more intense. Crowds of people were constantly thronging Christ. He was very busy every hour with healing and teaching, and the strain of uninterrupted publicity and an incessant ministry must have been severe. The fear lest He might break down and the dread of the growing opposition of the religious leaders led His mother and brothers at this time to seek to induce Him to retire for a season for quiet and rest. "While he was yet speaking to the multitudes, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, seeking to speak to him. And one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, seeking to speak to thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12: 46-50). Even as the writer of Hebrews says, "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (v. 11). Or we could turn to Matt. 25: 40: "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, *even* these least, ye did it unto me." Or again to John 20: 17: "But go unto my brethren, and say to

them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father, and my God and your God." "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Let us take now one of these remarkable sayings of Jesus, for instance that one recorded in Matt. 12:46-50, and earnestly try to find out what it teaches, and then by comparing with it other passages what the Bible as a whole teaches concerning the spiritual "Fatherhood of God" and the "Brotherhood of Man." We hear these phrases used a good deal now-a-days; we shall need to think clearly and to speak plainly about them. *Does the Scripture teach anywhere, does Jesus teach anywhere, that all men and women, irrespective of character and life, are spiritual children of the heavenly Father and brothers and sisters in the family of God?* Or are these terms, by the plain statements of Jesus and the uniform teaching of Scripture, reserved to designate a limited class only? In Matt. 12:46-50 the meaning seems to be very manifest. "But he" (Jesus) "answered and said unto him that told him, *Who* is my mother? And *who* are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand *towards his disciples*, and said, Behold, my mother and my brethren! For *whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven*, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." "Whosoever"; that is as broad as the

race, including red man and black man, brown man and yellow man; "whosoever" means that sonship is possible for any one; "whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" limits sonship to a certain class, to those who do God's will and are in harmony with His purposes. It is worthy of note that this saying of Jesus is reported with slight verbal variation in all three of the synoptical Gospels, and in each case the distinctive teaching of the Master is unmistakably evident. (Mark 3: 31-35; Luke 8: 19-21.) In its *possibility* sonship is as broad as the race, in its *actuality* it is as limited as obedience. *Any one may become* a son of God; only those *are* the sons of God who do the Father's will. *And this is the teaching of Jesus and the New Testament everywhere.* It is to His disciples that the Sermon on the Mount, in which God's Fatherhood is so prominent, is addressed. It is concerning His disciples that He says in John 20: 17, "My Father and your Father." And again in that classical passage in John 1: 12 it is said, "But as many as received him to them gave he the right to become children of God, to them that believe on his name."

Jesus and the New Testament writers uniformly distinguish between natural kinship and spiritual kinship. The error of the Jews was in making them identical. The Jews supposed that every one who was a natural descendant of Abraham

would be a member of the kingdom of God and of the family of God. Jesus and the New Testament writers say, "Not so, but he that doeth the will of the Father." Nicodemus, though a Jew born, must be born again, if he is to see the kingdom of God. Jesus distinctly charged the unbelieving Jews, though they were the natural descendants of Abraham, with being anything but His spiritual descendants, opposers of the truth, not children of God as they had boasted, but children of the devil. (John 8: 37-42). *The kingdom of God is not built upon caste, but upon character, not upon physical kinship, but upon spiritual affinity.* He is the real Jew, the child of the covenant and the heir of the promises, who is like Abraham in faith and works. "But he is a Jew, who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. 2: 29). "For ye are all sons of God,"—many quote the passage thus far, and then stop; but we have no right thus to mutilate Scripture. He does not say that all men are sons of God; but "ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 26). All that have faith in Christ are sons of God. "Whosoever doeth the will of the Father is my brother, my sister, my mother." And does some one ask, even as they asked Jesus, "*What does it mean to do the will of the Father?*" We turn to His own

answer in John 6: 28, 29: "Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." Because men are the natural children of God, created in His image and likeness, with personality and a moral nature, it does not follow that therefore all men and women are the spiritual children of God, destined to dwell in happiness and peace forever in the Father's house. The teaching of Scripture is just the reverse. Many are prodigal sons, living by their own choice afar from home, their own wills and lives alienated from the Father, feeding on pods which pigs eat, starving to death without the Father's bread. All such need to be reconciled to the Father. Otherwise what Jesus predicts must sooner or later take place: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7: 23). But of as many as accept Christ as a personal Saviour and aim to do the Father's will a blessed relationship is declared. "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Heb. 2: 11). "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Let us not envy those who lived in the days of

Christ's physical life, and knew Him in the flesh; even those who were mother, sisters, and brothers; for ours is an higher privilege. Once, when Jesus was teaching in a certain place, it is recorded that "a certain woman out of the multitude lifted up her voice and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts that thou didst suck. But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11: 27, 28). Don't envy those who lived in the time of Christ, even those who enjoyed the physical relationship of mother, sisters, and brothers. Ours is an higher privilege. Certain opponents of Paul boasted of a physical relationship to Christ, of having seen Him in the flesh; but Paul claimed a superiority for the spiritual relationship (2 Cor. 5: 16, 17). Let no one waste time in envying those who were physically related to Christ; but let us rather see to it that we enter into some appreciation of what Jesus meant when He said: "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it"; and "Whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother, and sister, and mother." "It is expedient for you," of advantage to you, gain to you, "that I go away" (John 16: 7); the physical relationship is not to be compared with the closeness and power of the spiritual. Jesus is willing to put His hand into that of *every one who does the will of the*

Father, be he Protestant or Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Episcopalian or what, whatever his age, sex, external condition or nationality, and to say, "My brother, and sister, and mother." A closer tie He feels for every such one than is expressed by these homelike and loving terms, "brother," "sister," "mother"; "For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren."

Do we not often think of the great privileges of those who are related to distinguished persons? Have you not often thought of the brother of the President thus? What a hallowing of life, what a restraining power in life, what a constraining power such a relationship, if appreciated, must bring. Surely, if some morning that brother should feel "blue," or discouraged, asking himself for a moment whether life were worth living; at once the thought, it would seem, must come, "He is my brother," "I am his brother." How all of his life would thus be hallowed by the relationship! If some morning that brother should be tempted to do or think some mean, sinful, evil thing; would not the thought of his high relationship at once restrain him? "He is my brother"; "I am his brother." What a constant constraint, also, there ought to be from such a relationship to noble thinking and lofty action! When millions of people waited eagerly

and enthusiastically to greet the home-coming Admiral, crowned as he was with the praise of a nation, did you not think of the hallowing, restraining and constraining power of relationship? That brother in Vermont must have felt it. Cousins and nephews all over the land felt it, and rejoiced in being introduced as "related to the Admiral." How it nerved them to do the right! How it made them strong to overcome the wrong! How it tended to dignify and hallow their lives! *Children of God! A greater privilege, a nobler relationship is ours!* He, who sits at God's right hand, the most heroic figure in human history, the greatest thinker of the ages, the best and noblest man who ever lived, the One who is becoming more and more the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, is glad to take you and me by the hand, provided we are aiming to do the Father's will, and to say to each one of us, "My brother," "My sister," "My mother." Surely, if we can get some real appreciation of the reality of this relationship, it must become a mighty influence in our lives. *What a halo is thrown about life*, when you and I remember, "He is my brother!" "I am His brother!" Life must always be grand and glorious for us in view of this our divine relationship. *What a restraining force in our lives* when we remember, "He is my brother!" "I am His brother!" Can we easily go on in sin and selfishness, when we are mindful

of our relation to Him? *What a constraining power*, driving us on to high feeling and noble action, in the thought, "He is my brother," "I am His brother!" May God help each one of us, who are children of a king, to appreciate our Christly kinship. Let each one of us at some time of special spiritual susceptibility take some one of these remarkable sayings of Christ on this subject, such as that recorded in Matt. 12: 46-50, and, as we read and reread it carefully and prayerfully, let us ask the Holy Spirit to make real to us its meaning and give to us a keen sense of our relationship to Him and of His relationship to us.

In vs. 14-18 of the second chapter the writer of Hebrews goes on to make still more manifest the necessity of the humanity and death of Christ, and the closeness of His identification of Himself with those who are being saved. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily not to angels doth he give help, but he giveth help to the seed of Abraham. Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to

God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (chap. 2:14-18). In other words, because the children, those who are being saved, are sharers in flesh and blood, i. e., are mortal and subject to death, he himself also partook of flesh and blood, i. e., became mortal and one to whom death was a possibility, *in order that He might die*, and that through dying He might take away the power of him that had the power of death, i. e. the devil, and might deliver from the fear of death all those who throughout their lifetime were continually slaves to the dread of death. For truly it is not angels to whom He gives a helping hand, but to the seed of Abraham. Had He come to save angels, He would have become like angels, partaking of their nature and experiencing their lot; but He came to save men and women. The writer mentions only "the seed of Abraham," because he is writing as a Jew to Jews; even as Matthew's Gospel, written to Jews from the Jewish point of view, traces the genealogy of Jesus only back to Abraham; while the universal Gospel of Luke traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam. So had the writer of Hebrews been writing to Gentiles, he would doubtless have used the larger expression, "He giveth help to the seed of man." And so, because he came to save sinning, suffer-

ing, dying men and women, *it was a moral necessity that He should become in all respects like unto those whom He came to save, that He might prove Himself to be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.* Mercifulness and faithfulness had not been characteristics of the priests of Judaism, but rather the opposite. In the Herodian times Jewish priests had become "notorious for their cruelty, insolence and greed. The Jews said that there had been no less than twenty-eight high priests in 107 years of this epoch (Jos. *Antt.* 20: 10) their brief dignity being due to their wickedness." But Christ has been thoroughly fitted to become a merciful and faithful high priest (of whose death, sacrifice and high-priestly work the writer will have much to say in later chapters) because in so far as He Himself had been tempted and tried, "by His passion acquiring compassion," He is able to help those who are being tempted and tried. Thus we see that Christ's humanity, sufferings and death are not inconsistent with the greatness of His position as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, King, not inconsistent with His prerogatives as a Son; but on the contrary this was the best possible way, highly honorable and indeed a moral necessity in view of the end desired, by which the Son of God should be thoroughly fitted to do His faithful, merciful, sympa-

thetic, high-priestly work for a sinning, suffering, dying race. *His humiliation, however, was only temporary; for now He sits crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high, perfected in the power of His priesthood, and the hope of the whole human race.*

The Son of God became a man that He might die. From the very first the shadow of death fell upon Him; for as Simeon blessed God in the temple the Spirit constrained him to say to Mary, that her Son would be "for a sign that is spoken against; yea and a sword shall pierce through thine own soul" (Luke 2:34, 35). As Christ's life rushed on to its appointed end, and it became more and more apparent what that end must be, Jesus tried to unfold to His disciples that He had come to die. "And he took unto him the twelve, and said unto them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things that are written through the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man. For he shall be delivered up unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and shamefully entreated, and spit upon: and they shall scourge and kill him: and the third day he shall rise again" (Luke 18:31-33). He came that He might die; and those artists, who represented the Christ-mother and the child, were true to Scripture when they put into the dim background of their Madonnas the vision of Calvary. *The shadow of the cross fell upon*

Christ's pathway from the first. "Since the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself partook of the same" that He might die. Seeing that all of the Gospels give so much space to those events which led up to and culminated in Christ's death, and the epistles speak of His death so often; it would seem that that method of thinking which tends so strongly to minimize the importance and significance of His death needs to correct its angle of vision. We need unquestionably to make more of the significance, motives and character of Christ's life; *but in doing so let us not minimize in our thinking the fact and meaning of His death.*

Upon this great subject of Christ's death the writer of Hebrews speaks from various points of view. In this passage he presents the Saviour's death as the basis of His sympathetic high-priestly work. Through His own death Christ robbed death of its terrorizing power, and became able to deliver all who because of death were slaves of fear. It is very hard for us in our day to realize the awfulness of the ancient dread of death. We are the unconscious heirs of centuries of Christian thinking. *The thought of death has for us been marvelously transformed;* for we have learned to sing sweet songs at funerals, to plant flowers of hope over graves, and to write words of faith upon monuments. The thought of death is not to us what it was to the ancient world.

To them death was the great monster. All of the philosophy of the centuries before Christ, with a very few noble exceptions, may be summed up in the Jewish saying, "In this life death never suffers man to be glad." In the Jewish Scriptures there was little positive light upon death, or a life beyond the grave; a hope expressed here and there in a psalm, a conclusion of Job in the midst of his inexplicable earthly trials, a momentary vision from some mountain peak of inspiration; but that was all. It was not until Christ lived and died and rose again that life and immortality were brought to light through the Gospel. *Even now the only sure light at the grave comes from Christ.* Grand Pierre, the great French preacher, might well exclaim, "What is a tomb without Jesus! An empty, gloomy place!" Even to-day, as Canon Farrar says, "In heathen and savage lands the whole of life is often *overshadowed by the terror of death*, which thus *becomes* a veritable 'bondage.' "

This dread of death in the pre-Christian and the heathen worlds is accounted for in view of several things. In the first place all have a natural, instinctive craving for life. We do not want to give up life. The devil manifested a true insight into human tendencies when he said in Job: "Skin for skin and all that a man hath will he give for his life." The thought of death to the ancient world was the thought of dissolution,

practically a ceasing to be. Hades was the realm of disembodied spirits, and in that abode of the dead whatever existence there was was a very hazy, impersonal, indefinite, unsatisfactory thing, a thing not to be desired but to be dreaded; so that Paul wrote to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 5: 3, 4) that he did not want to go into any disembodied state, did not want to "be found naked," did not desire "to be unclothed," but clothed upon, that what is mortal might be swallowed up of life. The dread of a practical cessation of existence constituted a part of the ancient dread of death. Again, there was the awful thought of separation from dear ones with no hope of any reunion, which made death an awful thing to the Christless world. If father and mother and children could together have gotten into Charon's boat and have crossed the river without separation, the awful dread of death would have been lessened; but to be compelled to go one by one—oh, the loneliness of it! Still further, death became to that old world like an emigration from a well-known land and an immigration into a country of which one had no charts or maps; it was a leap into the dark, a plunge into the unknown. *Still further, there was an awful dread of a coming judgment*, an instinctive feeling that somewhere and somehow in the future vengeance and justice would meet their own, the secrets of this life would become manifest, the sins of the past

would be punished. All of these things made death a terror to a Christless world. Death then had an awful sting, the grave had then its victory. *But now, blessed be God! all this has been so changed.* "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

When Satan killed the Prince of Life, there was doubtless glee in hell for a few brief hours, for sin and death thought that they had triumphed; but soon their joy was turned to grief, for in dying *He had become the death of death.* He died not in defeat but in victory; and in rising from the tomb he manifested his supremacy over it. He had said that He would lay down His life of Himself, that He had "power to lay it down and power to take it again." Whatever power evil had was only a permissive power. For a time "it was the hour and power of darkness," but only "that by the Grace of God he should taste death for every man" (v. 9); so that the Master could truly say, "Now is a judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John 12: 31). At the end He cried upon the cross with a loud voice in triumph, "It is finished." Then the serpent's head was

bruised beyond remedy (cf. Gen. 3: 15; 1 Cor. 15: 54, 55). Paul wrote to Timothy and gloried in "our Saviour Christ Jesus, who abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Tim. 1: 10). Physiological death has remained the same as ever, but death from a moral and ethical point of view has lost its power. *The fear of death, the dread of death, for the Christian is a thing of the past.* There is no dread of Hades, nor of cessation of life, for death has become only transition, a sailing away to be forever with Christ (Phil. 1: 23). The awfulness of separation from friends is healed by the hope of a never-ending and glorious reunion. The loneliness and strangeness of death departs, when Christ is with us. The dread of the judgment is gone, for we have passed from death unto life and shall not come into judgment. "And Jehovah has laid on him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53: 6). Now every Christian can cry out with Paul, "Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin: and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15: 54, 55).

What death was before Christ came and what Christ's work has done for us has been illustrated by the story of a little girl, who was accustomed

to play in a field by the side of her father's house. She always played in that part nearest the house, for on the farther side of the field there was a large grove of trees, some ugly jagged rocks, a high precipice, a deep, dark valley; and some nurse or playmate had told the child about ogres, and hobgoblins, and similar imps. Even when she seemed happiest and cheeriest, if you noticed her closely, you would see her face at times turn pale, her form tremble, and within herself she would shudder as she thought, "Ugh! that awful place!" Even her happiest moments were tinged with fear and sadness. No joy of hers was unalloyed. But this little girl had a big strong brother, who loved her very dearly. It was the brother's burning wish that his sister should enjoy life to the full. No good thing should be withheld from her. He studied her joys in order to increase them; he sympathized with her sorrows and tried to remove them. One day as he lovingly watched her at play, he noticed her fear and her pain, as she shuddered at that awful place. At once he rushed to her help. Coming into the field where she was, he said, "Why, sister dear, there's nothing there that can harm you! Now watch me!" With that he stalked triumphantly across the field, went in under the shadows of the trees, climbed over the big jagged rocks, went down over the steep precipice, went through all the deep, dark valley; and then came

back again and showed himself alive and unharmed to his sister. Then he said, "Come, now, sister dear, we'll walk across the field together, even into the grove, we'll climb together over the rocks, we'll go down together over the precipice, we'll walk together through the valley. You'll not be afraid any more, I'm sure, for I'll go with you. There was nothing there to harm your big brother; there'll be nothing there to harm you, if you'll go with him." And the little sister put her hand into that of her elder brother, *and all her fear was gone*. They walked together across the field, into the grove, over the rocks, over the precipice, through the valley; and she feared no evil. So, ever since Christ triumphed over death, multitudes have been crossing the field of life and, passing over the rocks, have passed through the valley of death without any fear or dread. For them Christ "abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." All such share in the privileges which the Son of God brought, when He, "since the children are sharers in flesh and blood, in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

Greater than Moses



Chapter III.

LET us now review for a moment the course of thought in the first two chapters: God, who in the olden time was speaking unto the fathers through the prophets in a partial, multi-form, and therefore incomplete Revelation, *has spoken again, once for all, fully and finally, unto us in a Son*; who, because He is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, King, the outshining of God's brightness and the very impress of His substance, is best fitted to give us a full and final Revelation; and who in His great service of purification of sins has done His work so thoroughly and satisfactorily that He has now sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. This Son has inherited a name from Psalmists and Prophets infinitely superior to that of angels, the boasted mediators of Judaism. He is declared to be Son, they are servants. He is declared to be King, they are subjects. He is declared to be Creator and Dissolver, they are creatures. He now sits

upon a throne, they are ever and only ministering spirits sent forth to serve. *Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things of the Gospel spoken through Him lest we drift away from them;* for if the Old Testament Revelation, spoken through many subordinate messengers, was a thing which those who received it could not afford to neglect, how shall we escape if we give up this so great salvation; inaugurated by God's own Son, confirmed unto us by the eyewitnesses, God Himself also taking the witness-stand with them, and attesting the truth spoken by many signs and wonders and powers of the Holy Spirit according to His will. *Do you find difficulty in thinking of Christ's peerless pre-eminence and at the same time remembering so keenly His humble life and shameful death? Then think of the deep philosophy of it.* It has been God's gracious purpose from the first that we should enjoy this so great salvation and that not angels but dignified, glorified man should occupy the position of rulership. Man was made in the image and likeness of God, and made for dominion, but man on account of sin has failed to realize his dignity and destiny; therefore Christ, God's Son, came and partook of human nature that He might show us manhood at its best and help us realize our God-given destiny; though it cost Him His life, which by God's grace He was willing to sacrifice in behalf of

every man, and though thus for a time he was lower than angels, now He is crowned with glory and honor. His human life and death were necessary that He might be perfectly fitted to be the sympathetic, merciful and faithful high priest for a sinning and suffering humanity. He did not come primarily to save angels, otherwise He might have identified Himself in nature and experience with them; but He came to save men. Therefore it was necessary for Him to identify Himself thoroughly with them, through suffering to become perfected to be their Saviour, through death to free them from the power and the dread of death. *In all respects He must be perfectly fitted to be their faithful and merciful high priest, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.* Instead of being troubled, then, by this thought of His lowly life and sacrificial death, *let us glory in it*; "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to help those that are tempted." *Moreover, His humiliation was only for a time; now He sits crowned with glory and honor at the right hand on high.* (We shall consider in our next two studies the third and fourth chapters of Hebrews, which constitute the second section of the epistle. In the first section, chapters one and two, the writer has declared the superiority of Christ, the founder of Christianity, to angels who were the boasted mediators of Judaism. In this second section,

chapters three and four, he shows *the superiority of Jesus to Moses*, the human mediator of the Old Covenant. Having presented Christ to us as Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, King, the outshining of God's glory, the very impress of His substance, greater than any and all angels, it seems to us again, as when Christ was compared with angels, from our point of view to be an anti-climax to consider now the superiority of Jesus to Moses. But again we must put ourselves in the position of the original readers of the epistle if we are to understand the force of the comparison and the contrast. The Jews in their thinking had elevated Moses almost to an equality with God. Moses was to them the great mediator of the covenant, the man with whom God had talked face to face, the most illustrious character of human history, almost if not really divine. The proud boast of all Jews was, "We are Moses' disciples." Over against this claim of the greatness of Moses and of the revelation of God through him, the writer puts the superior claim, "*Jesus is greater than Moses and the revelation through Him deserves our firmest faith.*" The first six verses of the third chapter establish this superiority, while the rest of chapter three and chapter four constitute an urgent warning against unbelief and an earnest exhortation to Christian confidence.

"Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heav-

only calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God. And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken; but Christ as a Son, over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (3:1-6). The chapter begins with the word of inference, "wherefore," which helps us to keep in mind the greatness of Christ's position and the graciousness of His work as set forth in the previous chapters. These Hebrew Christians are here addressed as "*Holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling,*" while in the eleventh verse of the second chapter it is written: "For both he that sanctifieth *and they that are sanctified* are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." *In what sense were they "holy brethren"?* In what sense were they "sanctified ones"? Is there any biblical authority for the distinction that some would make between themselves, who are called "sanctified," "saints," "holy," and other Christians who are

just ordinary everyday followers of the Master? There are, to be sure, many kinds of Christians, some only babes in Christian knowledge and attainment, others more mature and Christlike in thought, word and deed; but neither in reason, revelation nor fact does there seem to be adequate basis for the distinction mentioned. *The use of the words "holy" and "sanctified" in the New Testament is made clear by their meaning and use in the Old Testament.* In the olden days there were certain places that were called "holy places." Did these places differ essentially in their composition from other places? No, but they were places that had been set apart for sacred use. God had either met and mightily blessed his people there, or had promised that he would meet them there. This method was a part of a preparatory education. God first taught the people that He was *somewhere* in order that He might later on make it plain to them that He was *everywhere*. In the fullness of time Jesus could say to the woman of Samaria, "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshipers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth." God is everywhere. The

partial revelation led people to believe in "holy places" in order that, having localized God and gotten clearly the thought of His reality and of His being somewhere, they might later on grasp the more spiritual idea of Jesus that *God is everywhere and may be worshiped anywhere.*

Again, in a partial revelation of His will it was taught that one-tenth of all one's possessions belonged to God, and should be given to Him. This was the sacred tenth. It did not differ in itself from the rest of one's possessions, but was set apart for God. This, too, was a preliminary step to that larger New Testament revelation that not one-tenth but *all that we have or are or hope to be belongs entirely to God.* "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ." Again in the partial revelation of His will God taught that one day in seven was sacred and holy, set apart for God's service. This also was a part of a progressive revelation leading up to the New Testament truth that *at all times we are to worship and serve God with all our hearts.* Of certain, who had failed to grasp the larger truth and who made righteousness to consist of

times and places, Paul wrote: "Ye observe days, and months, and seasons, and years. I am afraid of you, lest by any means I have bestowed labor upon you in vain" (Gal. 4: 10-11); and again, "One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let each man be fully assured in his own mind" (Rom. 14: 5). God is everywhere, and all we have, both possessions and time, belong to Him.

In the earlier days, also, there were three special classes of holy people: the prophets, the priests, the kings. They were usually anointed with the sacred, flowing oil, and thus were set apart for sacred service. They were called "holy," not because they were in any sense sinlessly perfect, but because they were set apart for special service. The most holy of all Old Testament sacred personages was the High Priest, who on the day of atonement needed yearly to make atonement for his own sins and those of the other priests before he was fitted to come into the holy of holies for the purpose of making an atonement for the sins of the people. The plain teaching of the New Testament, however, is that in the kingdom of God, as represented by Christianity, there are no distinctive classes of "holy persons." Joel's prophecy began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, when God's Spirit was poured out upon all classes of believers, and all began to declare God's truth. The whole company of

believers are said to constitute "an elect race, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2:9), a family of prophets, priests and kings. Uniformly the letters of the New Testament are addressed to all of the Christians in this or that city, and they are all of them spoken of as "saints," "sanctified ones," "holy brethren," "partakers of an heavenly calling." There does not seem to be adequate basis in revelation or fact for calling a certain class in the church "saints," or "sanctified," to the exclusion of the rest. *All* Christians are "saints." *All in Christ are "saints."* Not that they are sinlessly perfect. None on earth are. But they have been saved to serve, set apart for sacred living, called unto holiness of life. In Christ they are blameless and free from all condemnation. Some day they will see Him as He is and be like Him. They are candidates for realized sainthood; they are embryonic saints. By the blessed optimism of the New Testament they are "*all* addressed as "saints," "holy brethren," "sanctified ones," "partakers of a heavenly calling." They are saved to serve, called to holy living, destined to Christ-likeness.

These holy brethren, all of whom are sharers in an heavenly calling, i. e. a calling which comes from heaven, which leads to heaven and which is spiritual in its nature, are earnestly urged to "consider the Apostle and High Priest

of our confession, even Jesus: who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house" (v. 1, 2). They are sorely tempted in the midst of their trials to unfaithfulness, but Jesus amid all of the trials of His human life was unerringly faithful. In Him they may find at all times an inspiring Leader. We have been accustomed to think of Paul as an apostle, and Peter as an apostle, and James as an apostle; but *we have not been so accustomed to think of Jesus as an apostle.* The word "apostle" means "one sent forth on a mission." Moses was in this sense an apostle, for God said, "Come now, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh and thou shalt bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt." Jesus also was an apostle. God sent Him here to do a definite work of which the Master spoke when He said: "As the Father hath sent me, even so send I you," and again when He said: "I glorified thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do." Jesus and Moses were both apostles, sent by God to do a definite work. Of Moses the Old Testament says: "He is faithful in all my house" (Num. 12: 7). The writer of Hebrews, not caring unduly to shock the prejudices of these admirers of Moses by stating at once the superiority of Christ to the great mediator of the Old Testament says, "*Christ was as good as Moses.* He was an apostle, He was

faithful in all his house.' In this double way he pays high tribute both to Moses and to Christ, and prepares the way for his main point, "Christ is greater than Moses."

Incidentally also he mentions that Christ is high priest as well as apostle. Throughout these preliminary chapters, as he hurries on to the great theme and central section of the book, "the priesthood of Christ," the writer in his striking, anticipatory style throws in suggestive words and clauses that tend to keep the thought of the priesthood ever before the readers. He would have all understand that that is his climacteric point; but we shall reserve all of these anticipatory clauses until we come to the central section. Christ is both prophet and priest, doing the work both of Moses and Aaron. As an apostle He came from God to us to do a work for God with us. As a high priest He goes from us to God to do a work for us with God. Consider Him, fix your thoughts and hearts earnestly upon Him.

"For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honor than the house. For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God" (v. 3, 4). Though Moses and Christ were alike in some things, in that both were apostles and both faithful; yet *Christ has been deemed worthy of a fuller glory than Moses*, in as much as the founder of a house has

more honor than the house, or any part of it. Mosaism and Christianity, the Law and the Gospel, were two houses, both of which were established by God, the ultimate Source of all things; but God made all things through the Son, "for in him were all things created," "through whom also he made the worlds." "And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken; but Christ as a Son, over his house" (vs. 5, 6). Moses was a faithful servant whose faithfulness witnessed to things that were afterwards to be spoken, and a servant who became a type of the great prophet to come (Deut. 18: 15); but the position of Christ as a Son was infinitely superior to that of the servant Moses. The writer needs here only to call attention briefly to this superiority of Christ, since it has been so clearly set forth in the previous chapters.

"But Christ as a Son, over his house; whose house are we, if hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm into the end" (v. 6). *We constitute this household of Christ, if only we hold fast to our faith with cheerful confidence until hope is swallowed up in realization, and this dispensation is at an end. For the perseverance of the saints is the evidence of the genuineness of the saints. If we hold fast, and do not give up our Christianity to turn back to Judaism, or*

to unbelief, or to worldliness, as some are tempted to do at this trying time, we then show ourselves to be in deed and in truth the very household of Christ. All who are tempted to apostatize need to heed the warning which the Holy Spirit gave in years gone by through the writer of the ninety-fifth Psalm. You recall that that psalm was an urgent exhortation to the people on account of the character of God, their need of Him and their covenant relation to Him, to draw near and serve Him willingly and whole-heartedly:

“O come, let us sing unto Jehovah:

Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,

Let us make a joyful noise unto him with psalms.

For Jehovah is a great God,

And a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the deep places of the earth;

The heights of the mountains are his also.

The sea is his, and he made it;

And his hands formed the dry land.

O come, let us worship and bow down;

Let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker:

For he is our God,

And we are the people of his pasture,

And the sheep of his hand.

To-day, oh that ye would hear his voice!

Harden not your heart, as at Meribah,

As in the day of Massah in the wilderness;

When your fathers tempted me,

Proved me, and saw my work.

Forty years long was I grieved

With that generation.
And said, It is a people that
Do err in their heart,
And they have not known my ways:
Wherefore I swear in my wrath
That they should not enter into my rest."

This is the ninety-fifth Psalm from which the writer of Hebrews quotes at such length, basing upon this quotation a most urgent warning against unbelief. The psalmist had warned the people of his day against imitating the rebellion of their forefathers. For in the olden days, though Jehovah had led his people out of Egypt by a mighty hand and had graciously brought them through many perils safely upon their way, yet from Meribah to Massah they had rebelled and complained, and had constantly tried the patience of God.

When, for example, they had reached the wilderness of Paran they had been directed to send out spies to spy out the promised land, which was just in front of them. When the spies returned all of them were agreed that the land was just such a land as God had promised, a land flowing with milk and honey, i. e. a land of abundant pastures and many sweet flowers; but they also said that the inhabitants were people of heroic size and dwelt in walled towns. Ten of these spies were materialists, and only saw what the physical eye revealed. In discouragement

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and despair they exclaimed, "We are not able to conquer the country." Two of the spies, however, were spiritually minded men, who trusted in God, who had learned the lessons of the past, who felt sure that the God, who had brought them in such a wondrous way out of Egypt and who was more powerful than the terrors of the wilderness, would still lead them on. Caleb and Joshua said, "Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Num. 13: 30). In this trying situation *there were three possibilities before the children of Israel*. They could do as some suggested when it was said, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" (Num. 14: 4), i. e. they could go back to Egypt and become once more the abject slaves of Pharaoh. But, when they thought upon their former bondage and began to imagine how still more severe it would be, if Pharaoh should get them once more within his power, they dared not return. A second possibility was to follow the advice of Caleb and Joshua, trust implicitly in the God who had led them thus far, and go on into the promised land. They had not well enough learned, however, the lessons of the past to trust and obey in the present and future; and so they would not go forward. The third possibility they chose, i. e. to rebel and complain, wandering aimlessly here and there in the wilderness. With such people God could do

nothing. His righteous indignation was justly aroused, and He swore, "They shall not enter into my rest." Upon the basis of such a history the writer of the ninety-fifth Psalm warned the people of his day against any similar rebellion and unbelief; and the writer of Hebrews, facing a similar tendency in his time, warns his readers against such lack of faith and faithfulness.

"Whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end. Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith,—

"To-day if ye shall hear his voice
Harden not your hearts." (vs. 6-8.)

He does not say "as the Holy Spirit said," but "as the Holy Spirit saith." The great warnings and exhortations of Scripture are constantly valid. *The "To-day" of Scripture always means "Now."* Through the recorded warnings of the past the Holy Spirit still speaks to us. As Paul wrote concerning the Old Testament records, they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (1 Cor. 10:11). Even as Dr. N. D. Hillis in his "Influence of Christ in Modern Life" (p. 155) says of the living present Christ, "What during His three and thirty years Christ said, God ever says; what Christ did, God ever does; what Christ was, God

is through all space, throughout all time." Even so the Holy Spirit *saith*:

"To-day if ye shall hear his voice
Harden not your hearts."

In the twelfth verse the writer of Hebrews begins to apply the psalm quotation individually and personally to his readers. "Take heed, brethren,"—he speaks earnestly but in love,—*"Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God; but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called to-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin; for"* (as we said above) *"we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end"* (vs. 12-14). If only we are willing to learn from the mistakes of others, we shall be on our guard, every one of us, against the separating power and the deceitfulness of sin. *Just so long as the "to-day" of duty, privilege, and peril continues, we shall need to exhort and encourage one another, lest any one of us fall away from the faith;* to Judaism for instance as some of us are tempted to do. For we make it manifest that we have become partakers with Christ, if we hold fast our confidence firm unto the end; if indeed we heed the warning of the psalm that I have quoted.

Let no one presumptuously say, "Oh, we are

God's people; no harm can befall us. Once saved, always saved. Nothing depends upon us." "For who, when they heard, did provoke? Nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses?" (v. 16). Was it not God's own people whom He had delivered by a mighty hand? "And with whom was he displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?" (v. 17; cf. Num. 14: 29). "And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief" (vs. 18, 19). Even God's own people may defeat His gracious purposes by their sins of unbelief and disobedience. "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it" (4: 1). Manifestly there should be no division of chapters here, as 4: 1-13 is the urgent exhortation which concludes the thought of 3: 16-19.

Before we go on, however, with the writer's thought of 4: 1-13, let us return for a few moments to 3: 12-13. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called to-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (vs. 12, 13). *Never was this warning and exhortation*

more needed than it is to-day. All about us are those into whom has come an evil heart of unbelief, and who have become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. In nearly every community are those who a few years ago were staunch and strong in the faith, aggressive in every Christian work and way, constant users of the means of grace; but who are now out of fellowship with Christ and His church, and skeptical in their hearts about all such things. When any one of us may be among that number no one can tell. The voice of wisdom crieth: "Wherefore let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10: 12). "Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own steadfastness" (2 Pet. 3: 17). *It is because this hardening of the heart comes on so stealthily, is such a common experience, and is so sad and terrible in its consequences, that we need constantly to be on our guard against it, and need to exhort and encourage our fellows lest they too be overtaken by it.*

The human heart hardens as water congeals, not all in a moment, but little by little. As the temperature lowers on a winter's day a very thin film of ice forms on the surface of the pool, only strong enough at first to support the weight of a straw. Little by little it increases in thickness and strength, until it will hold a small stone.

Later on it will hold a small boy; while still later it will support a team. So does the human heart harden. To be forewarned is to be forearmed. "Beware lest any one of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." In nearly every community are those, who once were mainstays in the church, who come now to church only occasionally, and that too merely as on-lookers. They have become "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." They are far from happy, and are greatly to be pitied; for many of them hungrily long for a return of the faith and joy they once possessed.

"This is truth the poet sings
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow
Is remembering happier things."

One of these hardened ones one day told the author how he had come into his present condition. As he now looked back over his life the causes were all so clear. His experience is a typical one, and we may well afford to be on our guard against his mistakes. "When I first became a Christian and joined the church," said he, "I was very enthusiastic and earnest. *For some years I was a leader in every good work. I kept my eyes fixed on Christ. But later on I began to think too much of the failings of my fellows.* Brother Blank made a most beautiful prayer or testimony in the church, but drove

very close bargains in his store. Sister Blank was a splendid missionary worker away from home, and a fine talker in the church; but was an awful neighbor and scandal-monger, and almost a devil in the house. When these people would speak or pray, it tended only to disgust me. Instead of helping me, it hindered and hardened me. I would keep thinking all the while of their faults and failings, instead of the excellencies of Christ and my own need. Then, too, as I began more and more to realize my own short-comings, *I stopped all public confession of Christ*, lest I too might hinder some one. Little by little I began to give up all church work, until now it has been years since I have done anything for Christ or the church. *Another thing which tended to harden me was that I began to read less and less in my Bible*, and began to spend more and more time upon the daily newspaper and cheap literature; where much space was given to crime and the seamy side of life, and little given to honor and righteousness. My mind soon became filled with doubts as to truth among men and virtue among women. Having lost confidence in mankind in general it was not long until I became filled with doubts about myself and misgivings about God. Another thing that hardened me was this: *I now began to lower my standard of morality and Christian living, and to play with sin in various forms.* Certain indul-

gences, which I had laid aside when I became a Christian, I now took up again. As I look back over my own experience I can see just how it all has come about, that I am now hardened and skeptical, no good to myself and of little spiritual help to anybody else." This was his story. "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God; but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." Recognizing the tendency of all things to run down hill and the price of achievement, let us be on our guard against those things which help to harden, and constantly engage in that which helps one to faith. *Let any one feed upon the faults of his fellows, neglect the Bible and other means of grace, and harbor known sin in the life; and sooner or later he will find in himself "an evil heart of unbelief," "a departing from the living God," a spirit "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."* Let a person, however, keep his eyes fixed steadfastly upon Jesus Christ, use faithfully the means of grace, and purpose constantly to keep his own life clean; and his heart will grow more tender, his faith stronger, and his life sweeter as the years pass by. "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him" (vs. 1, 2).

Some years ago in New Haven, a couple were converted at a service in the jail. After they got out of jail and took up again the battle of life, the author would call upon them occasionally to read a few verses from God's Book and leave a word of cheer. One day the wife and mother said: "Yes, it's pretty hard sometimes. I hear people as they go past the door say, 'This woman was in jail.' And sometimes the children in the street call after my little girl and say, 'Jailbird! jailbird! your mother's been in jail.' Often it's a hard fight I have, to do right and live up to my new purpose. But," and her face brightened, "I've had a great help this week. Sunday we went to the mission and took the little girl with us. We have a song that we sing a good deal there:

'Would you lose your load of sin?
Fix your eyes upon Jesus.
Would you know God's peace within?
Fix your eyes upon Jesus.
Would you calmly walk the wave?
Would you know his power to save?
Would you have your cares grow light?
Would you songs have in the night?
Fix your eyes upon Jesus.'

The little girl has remembered just the one line, 'Fix your eyes upon Jesus;' and several times during the week when I have been very severely tempted to give up the fight and go back into sin, discouraged by the lack of human sympathy

and the half-heartedness of professing Christians, I have heard the little girl in her play singing, '*Fitch your eyes upon Jesus, fitch your eyes upon Jesus.*' At once I did so, and I found new and sufficient strength." To nobody, whether from the so-called higher walks in life or from the lower, can any better warning be given than the song of the little child, "Fitch your eyes upon Jesus." There are so many weeds in the world, so many hardened hearts and skeptical lives. *God help us to be flowers.* Let each one of us make up his mind to this: "Whatever others may do or become, God helping me, I'll keep my heart tender, my faith strong, my life sweet. I'll live and die a flower." Whoever else may be faithless, set your mind steadfastly upon "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus, who is faithful."

Rest



Chapter IV, verses 1-13.

WE study to-day Heb. 4: 1-13, which passage of mingled exhortation and argument is closely connected in thought with the warning against unbelief which formed the bulk of the third chapter. In the third chapter these Hebrew Christians, who are being severely tempted to apostatize from Christianity, have been reminded of their privileges as "holy brethren and partakers of a heavenly calling," and have been urged to fasten their minds and hearts steadfastly upon the Apostle and High Priest of their confession, Jesus; who has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, because the founder of a house has more honor than any part of it, and a Son over all is greater than any faithful servant, specially when that servant was a part of a dispensation which only pointed forward to greater things to come. Of this greater house these Hebrew Christians are members, if only they shall hold fast their cheerful confidence and glorying of their hope until the time of full frui-

tion. It is only to those who overcome that God gives the crown of life. The ninety-fifth Psalm and the history of rebellious, unbelieving Israel in the wilderness should be constant warnings to all of us against the awful consequences of apostasy. God had wonderfully delivered these old-time people from Egypt and was leading them marvelously, having given them glorious promises of a rest in a promised land, "a land flowing with milk and honey." But they were not willing to trust and obey. They provoked Him; they disobeyed Him; they would not trust Him; and so He swore in His wrath that "they should not enter His rest." It is perfectly clear, too, why they did not enter in. It was "because of unbelief." "Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God, lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."

Such is the earnest warning of the third chapter: which, with the example of the unbelieving Israelites and the thoughts of the ninety-fifth Psalm constantly in view, is continued throughout the first thirteen verses of chapter four. "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing

did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard" (chap. 4: vs. 1, 2). *The controlling thought of this section (vs. 1-13) is the idea of rest* as suggested by the history referred to and at the back of the ninety-fifth Psalm. There was a promise of rest given unto the children of Israel; which rest they failed to enter into because of their unbelief; a promise of rest which because it is unfulfilled is still left open to the people of God. The people to whom the promise was originally given failed to enter into its realization because of a lack of vital faith in what they heard. Of what advantage is the message preached, if the thing proclaimed is not appropriated by a living faith? God's promises are sure, but we need a constant faith, if they are to be of practical worth to us. We are freely and fully saved by God's grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the gift of God, lest any one should glory; but we are likewise urged to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in us both to will and to work of His good pleasure. *We need a constant faith, if we are to have a constant blessing.* Let us fear therefore, lest haply, seeing that this promise of rest is still left open, any one of you should seem to miss it. For it is manifest that good tidings have been preached to us, even as good tidings were preached to them. They had the promise of a physical rest,

we have the prospect of an even larger rest. They missed the rest before them, because of unbelief; but if we continue to have faith we shall enter into God's rest. "For we who have believed do enter into that rest" (v. 3). They did not enter into that rest, as is evident from their well-known history and from what is written in the ninety-fifth Psalm, even as he hath said:

"As I swear in my wrath,
They shall not enter into my rest."

They did not enter into that rest, "although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he hath said somewhere of the seventh *day* on this wise: And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; and in this *place* again:

They shall not enter into my rest.

Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter therein, and they to whom the good tidings were first preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, he again defineth a certain day, To-day, saying in David, so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before):

To-day if ye shall hear his voice
Harden not your heart.

For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken afterward of another day. There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people

of God. For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (vs. 3-11).

The thought of this somewhat involved passage seems to be this: In Scripture God is represented as having entered at the end of creation into His rest, a rest which He evidently intended that His people should share; but they do not seem ever yet to have entered into that rest. This rest was typified by the institution of the Sabbath; but the Sabbath did not exhaust God's thought of rest, for hundreds of years afterward He promised through Moses a rest to the Children of Israel. This rest they failed to enter into because of their unbelief. But even when their children under Joshua had entered into the physical rest of Canaan, God's thought of rest was not yet exhausted; for in that case the Holy Spirit hundreds of years after through the ninety-fifth Psalm in the collection of David's Psalms would not still have been speaking of rest, saying "To-day" as if the rest were still unappropriated. It is evident, then, that since God's purposes cannot fail, since He has provided a rest for His people and this rest has not yet been appropriated, and since it is His plan that some should enter it, and since the Holy Spirit still saith "To-day," it must be that

"*There remaineth a sabbatic rest,*" an ideal, perfect rest, a rest which will realize that which has always been in God's heart for His people, and which was so imperfectly typified by the physical rest of the Old Testament Sabbath Day and the rest of Canaan, "a sabbath rest for the people of God." He says "a sabbath rest," for the ideal rest that he has in mind is in its completeness a thing of the future. "For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his." It is God's rest into which such an one enters; it is something higher and deeper and larger than the merely physical. It is the rest of faith; "For we who have believed do enter into that rest." We can, then, by a constant faith fulfill the conditions of that rest. *Much depends upon us.* "Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest that no man fall, after the same example of disobedience." "Because the prize is noble and the peril great," let us strive earnestly to win this proffered rest. "There is need of active exertion that we may secure what God has promised." Let us make it our urgent business to fulfill the conditions and enter into that rest, lest any one of us fall and become likewise an example of unbelief.

We cannot afford to trifle with God's Revelation to us; its promises will be kept, its warnings are not in any sense meaningless. "For the

Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (vs. 12, 13). Whatever messages God speaks to men, whether through prophets and psalmists, or through His Son and the Apostles, or directly in the heart of each man; these messages, specially such a message as this message of rest given of old and renewed again and again, are not to be lightly regarded, but are worthy our most careful consideration. For the Word of God is "no dead letter of the past," but a living thing, energetic, and powerful to lay open the innermost depths of human nature. It has unrivalled keenness as a judge of moral issues. It is "sharper than the most formidable weapon of earthly warfare," the two-edged sword. "It pierces not only the natural soul, but even to the Divine Spirit of man, and even to the joints and marrow, i. e., to the inmost depths of these." These words should not be taken too literally and made the basis of a trichotomous theory of human nature. This is probably merely a poetical and rhetorical way of making emphatic the great thought that the Word of God penetrates "into the inmost recesses

of our spiritual being, to the thoughts, emotions and hidden motives, whence outward actions flow, just as easily and as surely as a sword of steel cuts through the joints and marrows of the physical frame." We must see to it that we honestly fulfill the conditions of these promises. We can't afford to trifle with His truth, nor can we in any manner deceive Him who gave it, for "there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

With this thirteenth verse the second section of Hebrews comes to a close, vs. 14-16 being transitional, leading on into the next and great central section of the book, the superior priesthood of Christ. In these first two sections of the book there is manifest *a striking similarity in the arrangement of the material*. In the first section (chap. 1-2) we had the superiority of Christ to prophets and angels declared; then an earnest exhortation to the Hebrew Christians to give greater heed to this superior revelation, this exhortation enforced by the suggestion of the awful penalty of neglect, and by the fact that even a fragmentary Revelation was seen to be a reliable thing worthy of regard, God's Word being steadfast; the section then being closed with a thought of Christ's sympathetic priesthood. In this second section (chap. 3-4) we have had the superiority of Christ to Moses declared,

then a long and earnest exhortation to continued steadfastness of faith in this superior revelation, this exhortation enforced by the unfortunate fate of the unbelieving Israelites in the wilderness, and by the fact that God's Word is active and energetic and worthy of our earnest attention; then the section is closed and the next opened by the thought of Christ's sympathetic priesthood. The similarity in the arrangement of the material of the two sections is thus quite a marked one.

Before we leave this second section to pass on the study of the royal Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, *let us consider a little further this thought of Rest; God's rest into which He Himself has entered and in which He wishes His people to share.* What is the rest into which God has entered? Both Henry Drummond in his "Pax Vobiscum," and F. B. Meyer in a chapter upon "The Gospel of Rest," have written helpfully upon this subject; and thoughts suggested by their writings or expressed by them will doubtless reappear in our present consideration. In Gen. 2:2 it is recorded, "And on the seventh day God finished his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made." This thought of God's resting on the seventh day is referred to several times in the Old Testament and finds a place in the argument of this fourth chapter. *What, now, is this rest of God?* Surely it does not

mean that after God had finished the work of creation, He was tired out, exhausted, and so needed to rest. Scripture says of Him, "He fainteth not, neither is weary." Nor does it mean that when God had finished the work of creation there was nothing more for Him to do; and that from that time until now He has been doing absolutely nothing. Scripture saith He hath entered into His rest (v. 10); but that rest cannot be the rest of inactivity, for Jesus justified His own activity on the Sabbath Day by the words, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work." God is surely ever busy in sustaining and guiding the universe. Not one sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's knowledge. God must be, we think, the very busiest person in all the world. The rest to which Scripture refers probably is the rest of conscious achievement, the rest which comes as a result of reasonable satisfaction, of truest contentment. God had thrown Himself with keen delight into the work of creation, and at each step of the work "God saw that it was good." It was a constant delight to Him from first to finish, and when at last all the mighty work was done He could feel that it was good, yes, "very good"; and He entered into His rest. *The rest of God is not, then, the rest of inaction, nor the rest of weariness, but the rest of a divine contentment, the rest of a satisfied heart.*

This rest of God is open to us. If we share in His work, we shall share in His rest. If we use faithfully the talents that He entrusts to us, we cannot miss that rest. Some day it will be said to every one who perseveres in this faith, "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." God was busy building up a physical heaven and earth, and when they were completed He entered into His rest. He desires us to work with Him in building up a new heaven and a new earth, a kingdom of God upon earth, and when our work is done, we shall be invited into that rest. No one who has in any way contributed to the grand result shall miss his reward. But that rest of God will not be a rest of stagnation, of idleness; nor will it be a rest from weariness and exhaustion. Heaven, it would seem, will be a place of intense activity, and freedom from all need of rest from exhaustion or weariness. In Revelation is it said, "They serve him day and night" (i. e., continuously) "in his temple" (Rev. 7: 15). And again it is said, "there shall be night no more" (Rev. 22: 5). And again, "that they may rest from their labors" (Rev. 14: 13). It will be rest, but not stagnation. It will be rest, but not for fear of weariness. Here the coming of night means an opportunity to rest from exhausting toil. Days without

nights would be a curse to us now, for our weak flesh soon wears out, and we hail with delight the time when God begins to pull down the curtains of nature and to say to all living earthly creatures, "Rest." But "there will be no night there." When we shall have laid aside this body of our humiliation and put on the body of His glory, we shall not need the night. Heaven will be a place of conscious fellowship, and of constant service, and not a place of idleness. God's rest is freedom from carking care, the rest of a contented heart, the joy of a delightful service.

False ideas about work have given to many people false ideas about rest. Work has been too often thought of as the curse of sin. We forget that work in itself is not a bane, but a blessing. Even the first Adam, when placed in the Garden of Eden and living in a sinless state, was given work to do. God loved him too much to doom him to idleness. He was to trim the trees, care for the flowers, and gather the fruits of the garden. His employment was of the most delightful kind; for to have placed man in Eden with nothing to do would have been to have made his garden his hell. And the second Adam, the sinless Son of God, gloried in work, and tried most earnestly to correct the prevalent false ideas of rest, which had made the Jewish Sabbath a burden instead of a boon. Rabbinism had interpreted God's thought of rest in a purely negative

sense; and had made the Sabbath a day when nothing should be done. *Jesus re-interpreted to men God's thought of rest by adding the positive thought of service to the Rabbinical idea of the Sabbath.* "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath." God's thought of rest is not a state nor a place nor a time of idleness, nor of stagnation; but of heart satisfaction, of fellowship, of wholesome and helpful employment. Highest life is to be found not in sloth, but in service. The curse of sin was not in work, but in the wear and tear of irksome toil; even as the American Revised Version translates Gen. 3: 17-19, "In toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field: in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread." In Paradise Regained there will still be work to be done, though the grinding, wearing, exhausting toil of earth will be forever past. We are not in the training-school of life these many years to prepare for an eternity of idleness and inactivity. God's rest will mean for those who enter it freedom from the slavery of toil, release from carking care and deliverance from the exhaustiveness of irksome labor. Set free from these, as sons of the living God, we shall glory in ceaseless service. No longer the subjects of servile tasks, heart-free and hand-free we shall realize our God-given destiny as lords and mas-

ters, "made in the image and likeness of God and made to have dominion." Even as the Master Himself has pictured it forth, "Well done, thou good servant: because thou wast found faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities" (Luke 19: 17). In connection with this interpretation it may be found helpful to quote a paragraph from Prof. A. B. Bruce's series of thoughtful essays upon the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which he expresses the opinion that the writer probably conceived of the idea rest "*not as cessation from work absolutely, but only from the weariness and pain which often accompany it.* There was work for man in paradise. God placed him in the garden of Eden to work it (such is the Septuagint translation) and to keep it; and the whole description of the curse implies that it is the sorrow of labor, and not labor itself, that is the unblessed element." Irksome toil and worry shall pass away. Even as John speaks in Revelation, "They shall rest from their labors," and "pain shall be no more." Let each one of us by constant faith and faithfulness see to it that we fulfill the conditions, and make sure of our entrance into that rest.

But this passage in Hebrews also hints at another rest, a rest that is even now in this life open to all who believe, the rest of faith, a rest which is but a foretaste and a prophecy of that ideal rest which is to come. Chap. 4: v. 3 reads:

"For we who have believed *do enter*" (are now entering) "into that rest." And Jesus said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." *This rest is even now open to all who believe*; not a post-mortem affair, but an experience possible in this life to all who will fulfill its plain conditions. This rest which Jesus offers to give to those who come unto Him is a rest which He Himself enjoyed; not the rest of stagnation or idleness, for its very condition is the getting under a yoke of service; not a rest which is an external thing, conferred independently and arbitrarily upon any one apart from fulfilled conditions, for the saying is, "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, and you shall find rest for your souls"; not a purely physical thing, but a rest of soul, a heart rest. *This rest which Jesus enjoyed was a poise of life, a calm at the soul's center, a peace in the heart*, which the world could not give nor the world take away, a repose of life independent of external conditions, neither made by them nor marred by them. This peace and rest and calm and poise of life were enjoyed by Him amid conflicting external conditions and in a life of intense service. It was not the rest of stagnation or idleness, but repose in the midst

of uninterrupted service, confusion and uproar all about, yet a calm in the soul. Wonderfully was it manifested in those exhausting and exciting hours at the close of His life when even under the shadow of the cross He could say in His last will and testament to His disciples: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful."

And what are the conditions of this rest for disciples? They are these: (1) *A full acceptance by faith of the completed work of Christ as the basis of our entire justification.* The rest of Christ was partly the result of a conscience free from the burden of sin. He could calmly say, "who convicteth me of sin?" For us sinners this "conscience free from the burden of sin" can come only through appropriation by faith of the righteousness of Christ. All those who fully accept Christ's completed work as the sole basis of justification can cry out with Paul in constant triumph: "There is now therefore no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." "If God be for us, who is against us? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Jesus Christ that died, yea, rather, that was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" All

those who by faith make this great truth their own, and continue daily to appropriate his righteousness have found the first condition of the Christian's rest. Let any person begin for a moment to think that his own justification depends upon his own righteousness, and his peace of soul will vanish at once. Only as we hear Him cry upon the cross, "It is finished!" and our own hearts gladly respond, "Yes, it is *finished*," do we find rest from the burden of sin.

(2) *We must will God's will.* The rest of Christ was partly the result of a life in harmony with the will of God. His life was a continual "Amen" to the will of the Father. His first recorded utterance was, "I must be about my Father's business"; and toward the end of life we hear Him pray, "Not my will, but thine be done"; while of His whole life He could say, "I do always those things that please him." Just as long as our wills are at cross-purposes with the revealed will of God, we can have no peace. His will leading in one direction, and our wills at right angles to His always means a cross. There can be calm in the soul only when it is our constant and conscious purpose to find out and to do so far as it is revealed to us the will of God. In proportion as day by day we can not only say it with our lips but sing it in our hearts, "Thy will be done," shall we find rest. In proportion as we learn really to crave His will to be done in

our lives, and to desire that He should plan our days rather than we ourselves do we fulfill the second condition of rest.

(3) *We must be usefully busy.* Largest life is to be found only in service. As we lose our lives for others' sakes we find it. One of the secrets of Christ's rest was the joy of conscious service. "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of me and you shall find rest to your souls." We must take His yoke upon us. We must look at life as He looked at life. We must learn of Him the joy of meek and lowly service; and we shall find in this Christlike service rest to our souls. Helen Gould does not need to work for her living, but she must serve if she would find life. We must work if we would have rest. Christlike rest cannot be found in idleness. Only as day by day we are honestly and usefully busy do we fulfill a third condition of rest.

(4) We must not only accept Christ's completed work as the basis of full justification, we must not only will God's will, we must not only be usefully busy, but we must be willing *trustingly to live one day at a time*. Jesus taught that one great source of earth's unrest was in being "anxious for the morrow"; while one of heaven's sweetest blessings was to be found in the daily petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." One day, one hour, one moment at a time must be our

rule. We must learn joyfully to sing not only the earlier song, "I Need Thee Every Hour," but also the later song, "Moment by Moment." When we borrow trouble from the morrow the peace of to-day is gone. We must learn to glory in the fact that we are day-laborers. With absolute confidence that "He doeth all things well," and that "all things work together for good to them that love God," and that our Good Shepherd, though He may lead us over rocky mountain passes or through deep dark valleys, will not lead us amiss, we shall day by day fulfill another condition of rest. Thus will Jesus' words become to us a blessed reality. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

As Good as Aaron



Chapter IV, verse 14—V, verse 10.

THE last three verses of the fourth chapter of Hebrews most beautifully serve *the double purpose* of furnishing a cheering and strengthening conclusion to the stern warning against unbelief and missing the rest of God, which forms the bulk of chapters three and four, and also of providing a skillful transition to the next subject, the great High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. These Christian Jews had just been most strikingly and vividly reminded of the tragic story of those faithless thousands who through unbelief had failed of the promised land and had perished in the wilderness. The urgent necessity of a constant faith and the awful danger of missing God's proffered rest had been forcefully impressed upon them; the warning having been made specially emphatic by an almost dramatic description of the penetrating power of God's living word, which is sharper than any two-edged sword in its power to cut into the very center of things, and keen to discern the thoughts

and intents of the heart, the heart whose innermost desires are "naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." After receiving such a stern warning as this, it would not have been strange *if some or even many of these Hebrew Christians should have been plunged almost into despair* at the thought of their inward doubts and their outward difficulties. It was a very wise, timely, and helpful thing, therefore, that the writer just at this point should turn their attention somewhat away from themselves and direct their thoughts to the great High Priest who Himself has entered into God's rest, who is thoroughly fitted to sympathize with their infirmities, and who has immediate grace and help for every moment of need. By directing attention again to the priesthood of Christ, the writer also skillfully opens the way into the subject which is to control his thought for the next five or six chapters.

"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and find grace to help *us* in time of need" (vs. 14-16). *This subject of Christ's*

priesthood is introduced here not for the first time, but with the resumptive words, "Having then a great high priest"; for already several times before the subject has been mentioned, it being the writer's evident desire to keep the theme constantly before his readers as his one central thought. In v. 3 of chap. 1 he had spoken of the One who, "when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high"; and again, in v. 9 of chap. 2, he had spoken of the purpose of the Father that "by the grace of God he" (Jesus) "should taste death for every man"; and again in v. 17 of the same chapter, it was said, "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people"; and still again, at the beginning of this second section of the book in v. 1 of chap. 3, these Hebrew Christians had been urged to "consider the Apostle and High Priest" of their confession, even Jesus. The "Having then" of v. 14 in chap. 4, points backward to v. 1 of chap. 3, and to the other places where the priesthood of Christ has already been mentioned. Indeed this way of speaking far ahead of some subject which he is later on to develop more fully is a very striking feature of the style of this writer. We shall find more examples of the same thing at other places

in the letter. Some one has described the movement of our author's thought as "like that of the flowing tide, which falls back upon itself, yet in each successive wave advances to a point beyond that reached by any previous one." So now the writer re-invites the attention of his readers to the High Priest of their confession, "and in doing so uses words every one of which contains an assertion which he means to prove or illustrate, and which being proved will serve the great end of the whole Epistle, the instruction and confirmation of the ignorant and tempted."

We Hebrew Christians not only have in reality "a High Priest," but *we have* "*a Great High Priest*," whose superiority and ideal character will soon be manifest. Not only so, but our Great High Priest "has passed through the heavens." Old Testament High Priests on the day of atonement passed through the great blue veil into the holy of holies of the tabernacle, but our great High Priest has passed through the lower heavens into the very presence of the living God, having Himself entered into that royal rest in which He would have us share. Our great High Priest is none other than "Jesus the Son of God," one who is both human and divine; the man Jesus can, as will soon appear, sympathize with us; the Son of God surely will be able to help us. Since we have then such "a great High

Priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." In the midst of our many temptations to apostatize and our danger of missing the rest of God, let us cling fast to our faith in Him, whom we have openly confessed to be our Saviour and Lord. We can do so with confidence, "*for we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*" Let no one be hankering after the comfort and help of the priests of Judaism, supposing, because our High Priest has now passed through the heavens and is now seated crowned with glory and honor at the right hand of the Majesty on high, that therefore His divine glory has put up a bar between Him and us, and separated Him from us, and us from Him. *He is just as near to us as the priests of Judaism; yes, even nearer.* They, specially in recent years, have often been cruel and unsympathetic, merciless and faithless; but he has been "in all things made like unto His brethren that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest."

Let us not, then, give up our faith, nor allow ourselves to be defeated by our trials, for we are not without a great High Priest, who can thoroughly sympathize with our infirmities, which for us are so often occasions of sin. His life upon

earth was passed amid just such temptations and difficulties as are confronting us. In His exaltation at the right hand of the throne He does not forget how sorely He Himself was tried. *He remembers how He was tempted* to put personal pleasure before stern duty; how He was tempted to be discouraged by the apparent failure of His work; how he dreaded the awful experience of the cross; He remembers how he sat weary upon the well at Samaria, and how He shed tears of sorrow at the tomb of Lazarus. No one knows better than He how true it is that many times "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." He knows what it means to have enemies malign Him, and friends misunderstand Him. He knows what it costs to be loyal to one's convictions. He knows what it means to be considered a crank; to be declared by one's friends to be "utterly foolish"; and by one's enemies to be "in league with the devil." He knows how discouraging it is to live amid insult and persecution; how all such things tend to dampen one's enthusiasm and to deaden one's faith. Oh, Hebrew Christians! there are no trials and temptations of yours, past, present or future, in which He cannot sympathize with you; for "he hath been in all points tempted," and tried, just as you are now being tempted and tried. He knows the terrible power of all these temptations. We often yield to our infirmities and fall into sin

before temptation has spent its force upon us; but upon Him all these trials beat in vain; for amid all His temptations He was "without sin." *He felt the full force of trial, and resisted it all.* He, then, can fully sympathize with the most tried one among us; for it is the sense of the power of the temptation rather than the being overcome by it [that is the true ground of sympathy and helpfulness. Having been "tempted" He can sympathize with us; being "without sin," He can intercede for us.

"Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." As those in olden days who under the Levitical system brought a sacrifice to God were said to "approach unto God" (Lev. 21:17), so let us "draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace," making known every thought, feeling and wish, confident in our hearts that our Great High Priest, who has passed through the heavens, knows our necessities, understands our infirmities, and is both able and willing to help us. We need mercy for our many past failures, and grace for our present and future work; both are always ready at our every moment of need.

"Where high the heavenly temple stands,
The house of God not made with hands,
A Great High Priest our nature wears,
The guardian of mankind appears.

"He who for men their surety stood,
And poured on earth His precious blood,
Pursues in heaven His mighty plan,
The Savior and the Friend of man.

"Though now ascended upon high,
He bends o'er earth a brother's eye;
Partaker of the human name,
He knows the frailty of our frame.

"Our fellow-sufferer yet retains
A fellow feeling for our pains;
And still remembers in the skies
His tears, His agonies, and cries."

To Him let us confidently come that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help us in every time of need. *Let us constantly cultivate amid our many trials and perils the consciousness of our infirmities, and remember at all times the fullness of His sympathy and the power of His helpfulness;* then His strength shall be our strength and our weakness shall be swallowed up in His might. So long as we do this, it will not be possible that any of us shall miss the rest of God.

After the three verses of transition at the close of chapter four, *the writer now takes up in earnest in chapter five the great central theme of the Epistle to the Hebrews, i. e. the Ideal High Priesthood of Jesus Christ.* This subject he pursues from chap. 5: v. 1—10: v. 18, showing plainly that Jesus Christ in His Person and work exhausts the gamut of possibilities and desir-

abilities in priesthood, and that therefore no other priests or sacrifices are necessary. His argument was calculated to make it perfectly manifest that if these tempted and tried Hebrew Christians should turn back from the worth and work of Jesus Christ to the mediation and sacrifices of the priests of Judaism, they would not be gainers in any sense but losers in every respect. Whatever was helpful in the worth and work of the priests of Judaism is found in a perfect way, in an ideal form, in the priesthood of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, they were only the representatives of a provisional scheme: for they foreshadowed the coming of a greater priest; their tabernacle, glorious as it was, was only for a time; their covenant was to be superseded by a new covenant; and their work, being constantly repeated and never done, had many marks of an unsatisfactory service. But the priesthood and service of Jesus Christ is that of the ideal priest, whose coming was foreshadowed from the very beginning of Jewish history; who meets in Himself every desire and need of the human heart; who now ministers in the realm of the real and the abiding, in the very dwelling-place of God, the true tabernacle; whose work is the basis of a new covenant; and whose sacrifice, complete in itself, is the cause of an eternal redemption for all who believe. This is in outline the argument for the superior priesthood of Christ, which as before

indicated begins in earnest in chap. 5: v. 1 and extends through chap. 10: v. 18.

It will be necessary for us who to-day are studying the Epistle to the Hebrews to *remember that the writer all the way through this high-priestly argument is using words and phrases which were vividly suggestive to these Hebrew Christians*, who had been accustomed all their lives to the impressive services of the temple, with its daily sacrifices, rising incense, sprinkling of blood, white robed priests, and gorgeous ceremonial of the great day of atonement; words and phrases which for us, by very virtue of the cessation of Jewish sacrifice and our unfamiliarity with its services, have lost much of their *photographic power*. It is of very great importance, when we are studying such an historic revelation as the Bible contains to keep this principle in view. As Dr. R. W. Dale, whose "Jewish Temple and the Christian Church" is so helpful in the study of Hebrews, has well said: We need to remember that "the writers of the Christian Scriptures were all Jews: every one of them had lived till manhood in fellowship with his Jewish countrymen,—praying in the temple, offering sacrifices, attending the feasts; and some of their writings were written for readers who had received Jewish culture. Hence the language employed can only be rightly understood by knowing what it meant when used by Jews and addressed to Jews.

Words are not arbitrary creations of the human intellect—they grow out of the life and thought of a people; and you cannot know their meaning without knowing something of the people who employ them. If I want to know, for instance, what Paul meant when he talked about *sacrifice*, I must ask, not what is the meaning of that term among ourselves, but what it meant when Jews used it eighteen hundred years ago—for words change their meaning with the changing creeds and life of men." We must keep in mind, then, constantly, when studying this writer's treatment of the priesthood of Christ, the impressive ceremonial system of Judaism, which was continually before the readers' thoughts and helped to mould the form of the writer's argument.

But perhaps some one for a moment may think, "*Why should we to-day be interested in priesthood and sacrifice? Are not all of these things things of the past? What care I about them?*" But such a thought is superficial and short-sighted. When we look deeper and farther with reference to priesthood and sacrifice, we find ourselves face to face with some of the very strongest feelings of mankind. There are three things that seem to be well-nigh, if not wholly, universal with the race: a craving for God, a sense of alienation, a hungering for mediation and sacrifice. Deep down in the very roots of man's constituent nature is a craving for God. *Man is*

a religious animal. As Sabatier says: "Man is incurably religious." We have been made by God and for God, and never can find rest and satisfaction apart from God. *In every man there is a hunger for God.* Not every man is conscious of just what is the cause of his restlessness and dissatisfaction; and yet when truly interpreted to him his hunger speaks in the words of the forty-second Psalm: "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks,"—even as naturally as the lower animals crave water—

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks,
So panteth my soul after thee, O God.
My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God;
When shall I come and appear before God?"

Whether intelligent and uttered in earnest tones, or unintelligent and unexpressed, this is the deepest need of man. A capacity for God is writ large upon human nature. As Dr. Westcott says, "Man is born religious." And so we find everywhere where humans dwell, some sort of religion, some thought of and feeling after God. It may express itself in a very crude manner, but it is there, instinctive with the race. Plutarch in his travels could well say that he had found cities without walls, without literature, without kings or coin, without forum, theatre or gymnasium, but "there never was, nor shall there ever be, a city without temple, church or chapel." Or as Dr. F. B. Meyer has expressed it, "Wherever

men have built homes for themselves, they have erected the wigwam, the pagoda, the parthenon, the obelisk-guarded temple or the Gothic minster fashioned after the model of the forest glade, a leafy oracle petrified in stone." No non-religious tribe is actually found or known to have existed.

A second thing well-nigh, if not wholly, universal with the race is a sense of sin, a feeling of alienation and separation from God, caused by our own wrong-doing. This sense of sin is keener and expresses itself in a more intelligent way with some members of the race than with others; but with all it is present. Even the most ignorant heathen have the light of nature and the voice of conscience, so that Paul in Romans could truthfully say that even the Gentiles, though they had not received the written revelation of God, were without excuse, and were all involved in sin; "in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them"; (Rom. 2: 15) "because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity, so that they are without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God" (Rom. 1: 19-21).

This sense of sin and separation from God seems to be well-nigh, if not wholly, universal with the race.

A third fact which seems to be everywhere more or less conspicuously present is the craving for mediation and sacrifice. Westcott says: "The conception of priesthood in its most general form is recognized universally; it belongs to the constitution of man." The origin of sacrifice and priesthood is lost in mystery. The pictures in Genesis tell us of the first sin and immediately in the next chapter of sacrifice; without any explanation of where the idea came from or how the custom arose. Side by side with this instinctive craving for God and this well-nigh universal sense of sin is the universal presence of priesthood and sacrifice. Sometimes it is the father of the family, sometimes the chief of the tribe, sometimes one family among the families, sometimes it is the magician or the medicine man,—that acts as priest; but where or how priesthood and sacrifice began we do not know. We may feel sure, however, that they arose out of the deepest instincts of the race, and are an attempt to satisfy the keenest desires of the soul. As Dr. Dale says: "The passion for a priest seems to be an instinct of the human soul. I think most men will say: There are times when I am so disheartened by the consciousness of my moral weakness, when the contrast between the

Divine purity and my own sinfulness seems to me so appalling, that I have no courage to speak to God myself; times when I can perfectly understand how it is that my Roman Catholic brother clings to his saints to intercede for him, and to his priests to pronounce the absolution of his sins; times when I am unutterably thankful—having a better and a purer faith—that Jesus Christ is the representative of the whole human race, specially of all that obey Him. Yes, what the High Priest was to the Jew, Jesus Christ is to me." We shall find, therefore, that "the Ideal Priesthood of Christ," instead of being a dead letter, will be a live theme, touching upon some of our very deepest needs and lifting us into loving fellowship with Him who "by the grace of God tasted death for every man," and who became "in all respects like unto his brethren that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining unto God to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

In chap. 5: vs. 1-10 the writer begins to set forth this "Ideal Priesthood of Christ" by showing first that *Christ is as good as Aaron*, that those things which were the glory of the Old Testament priesthood are possessed also by the Great High Priest of Christianity. *Our author desires gently to lead these Hebrew Christians, who all these years have been fascinated by the glory of the Jewish priesthood, into the realiza-*

tion of the superior priesthood of Jesus Christ, the excellency of whose priestly position and work they so poorly appreciate. Therefore, just as, when he wished to show the superiority of Christ to Moses, he began by saying that Jesus was as good as Moses, in order later on to show that Christ "hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses"; so here he first tells these Hebrew Christians, who are longing for the mediation and sacrifices of the priests of Judaism, that Christ is as good as Aaron, who was the model Jewish priest, as a preparation for the argument of the subsequent chapters, in which he will make it very manifest that Christ is infinitely greater than Aaron.

There were two features of excellency in the priesthood of Aaron: It was a human priesthood and therefore presumably sympathetic; it was a divinely-established priesthood and therefore acceptable to and efficacious with God. "For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins" (v. 1-3). The word "for" in the first verse connects the whole argument concerning the superior priesthood of Christ with the closing exhortations

of chapter four: "Let us hold fast our confession," and "Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace"; which exhortations express the burden of the whole Epistle and are again taken up at the close of the high-priestly argument in chap. 10: v. 19. The first verse declares in unmistakable terms the primary function of the high priest: not to teach, but "appointed for men in things pertaining to God that he may offer both gifts and sacrifice for sins." "Gifts and sacrifices" is a phrase used comprehensively to include all kinds of offerings. The high priest is one who is "taken *from among men*" and "appointed *for men*," i. e. being himself a man he can act for men. "Who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring." The word translated "who can bear gently" is a very expressive Greek word, "signifying a feeling balanced between severity and undue leniency, a mean between two extremes." The character of the model high priest is "here *photographed instantaneously by this one Greek word*; he hates ignorance and sin, but he pities the ignorant and sinful." Westcott well observes that "willful, deliberate sin does not fall within the writer's scope, nor indeed within the scope of the Levitical law. Such sin required in the first instance the manifestation of a sterner judgment." The Old Testament high priest, "being taken from among men," and "appointed for

men," and himself "compassed or clothed with infirmity," which is the source of sin and makes necessary for him also an offering for sin, ought surely to be sympathetic with sinful men. Set apart as officially holy and yet conscious that he was personally sinful, dealing constantly with people who, heart-broken over sin, were striving for a better life, the high priest would surely be specially sympathetic. "Under the gorgeous robes of office there were still the galling chains of flesh." His character as priest might lead him to be severe with sin, but his character as a man would lead him to be sympathetic with the sinner, for on the great day of atonement every high priest in his prayer of intercession said: "Oh, do Thou expiate the misdeeds, the crimes, and the sins, wherewith I have done evil, and have sinned before Thee, I and my house."

"And no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron" (v. 4). The whole significance and worth of the high priest's work rested upon the fact of his divine appointment, which indicated that God would accept his intercession. Surely no one with any true consciousness of his own sinfulness would think of taking such an office of his own accord unto himself. The writer here, as all the way through the letter, treats of the provisions of Judaism as they came from the hand of

God, and as they existed in their purity and simplicity; not as they were represented by the corrupt practices of later years. *Christianity is better than Judaism at its best, in its original and God-given form.* In the later history of the Aaronic priesthood there was irregularity of appointment, and human ambition manifest; but not in the early years of pristine purity and God-given power. The unfortunate fate of Korah and his band, and the leprosy that fell upon Uzziah on account of priestly usurpation were known to all; while the Old Testament Scriptures had made it very plain that one of the greatest of Jeroboam's crimes was that "he made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not sons of Levi." Surely no sinful man would think that he could successfully approach the Holy God even for himself, to say nothing of priestly intercession in behalf of other sinful men, unless he had received a divine appointment to do so. "And no man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron." When the Jew, however, on the great day of atonement, knew that the high priest, a man like himself and a sinful man too, was entering into the very holy of holies, into the august audience chamber of the Righteous God, *and that too by God's own appointment;* then the sinful Jew felt sure that there was pardon for his sin, and the possibility of even such as he finding access to

God. In the fact of its human character and its divine appointment lay the glory of the Jewish priesthood.

Both of these glorious characteristics of the Aaronic priesthood are possessed in a perfect way by our great High Priest. However, these two elements of priesthood are not here treated as of equal importance; the fact of *the supreme importance of the divine appointment being emphasized* by the chiastic arrangement of the clauses, and also by its being mentioned twice of Christ, i. e. at the beginning in v. 5, and again at the end of this section in v. 10. In this skillful manner does the writer introduce the great fact which he wishes to burn into the hearts of these Christian Hebrews, that *Christ is no ambitious usurper* taking unto Himself the priestly office, but one whom God Himself has appointed to the work; a service which from its very character in His case surely no one would have sought for himself, but which He faithfully fulfilled on earth and still continues at the right hand of God because of a divine commission. His priesthood becomes also specially an appropriate thing when we consider His Sonship. "So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him,

Thou art my Son,
This day have I begotten thee.

As he saith also in another place:

Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek." (vs. 5-6).

Christ did not presume to take the sacred office of priesthood unto Himself, but God appointed His Son to the work, the very same God who said of Him:

"Thou art my Son,
This day have I begotten thee."

There can be no question of His divine appointment. "As he saith also in another place:

Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek,"

The quotation from the second Psalm about His Sonship is introduced here because *the position of Sonship really includes every special honor, kingly or priestly*, the definite office of priesthood being but a partial interpretation of His glory as Son. As Professor Bruce says: "Thus viewed Christ's priestly vocation ceases to be an accident in His history, and becomes an essential characteristic of His position as Son: Sonship, Christhood, Priesthood inseparably interwoven."

"Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been

made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation; named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek" (vs. 7-10). These four verses serve *the double purpose* of still further emphasizing the thought that *God must have appointed Christ to this priesthood*, for it is difficult to suppose that Christ took such a costly office to Himself, and also of making it plain that *Christ was a man among men*, surrounded with many trials and so able, as the human priests of Judaism, to sympathize with tempted and tried men. These two purposes are woven together here with great skill. Christ can certainly sympathize with tempted people; for He spent "days in the flesh," He knows what it means to be in dire need and to offer up "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears." There is a Jewish saying: "There are three kinds of petition each loftier than the preceding: prayer, crying, tears. Prayer is made in silence, crying with raised voice; but tears overcome all things." Christ is able to sympathize with those who use any or all of these expressions of human need, for He remembers His own experiences. He knows what it means to dread pain and to wish to avoid shame and calumny, for He remembers still how He prayed: "Father, if it be thy will let this cup pass from me." He knows what it costs to put loyalty to duty in the place of ease and comfort,

for Son though He was, He learned what obedience sometimes costs by the things which He suffered. Through these experiences He has been made perfect to be the author of an eternal salvation to all who obey Him. This thought of the perfection of Christ's sympathy runs like a golden thread through all these verses.

But there is also the emphasizing of the fact of His divine appointment to the priesthood. There may have been at times those who did seek the honor of the Aaronic priesthood; but surely no one would seek the priestly office when his work would be not only to offer a sacrifice but also to be himself the sacrifice offered. Jesus not only did not seek the work, but "in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear" (and He did agonize in the garden of Gethsemane and pray that the cup might be removed), "though he was a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered." For Him the office of priesthood meant trials and sorrows and death. "And having been made perfect"—and it took all these trials and sorrows and even death itself to fit Him thoroughly for His priestly service—"he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation," as has been said above, *not a self-appointed priest, but "named of God a high priest*

after the order of Melchizedek." The rhetorical force and beauty of the last verse is worthy of note, repeating as it does the thought of verse 9: "Christ prayed to God who was to *save* Him out of death, and became the cause of eternal *salvation* from final death; Christ learned *obedience* by His life of self sacrifice and became a Saviour to all them that *obey* Him." The redemption is open to all in its possibility; as universal as the race. In its actuality it is as limited as obedience to Him. In the word "eternal" redemption, we have another example of our writer's anticipatory style, a thought being thrown in here suggestive of the eternal feature of Melchizedek's priesthood, of which he will speak in chapter 7, and also pointing forward to the completeness of the salvation which he will later on describe.

Our author, having now shown Christ to be greater than any and all angels, greater than Moses and Joshua, and as good as Aaron, is now apparently ready to go forward with the thought that His divine appointment, "named of God, a high priest after the order of Melchizedek," constitutes Him *a priest greater than Aaron*. But before he plunges into this great subject, he pauses during a long parenthesis consisting of chap. 5: v. 11—6: v. 20, which parenthesis is very impressive in the literary structure of the book, and contains some very important truths which will furnish the subject of our next study.

The Awfulness of Apostacy



Chapter V, verse 11—VI, verse 20.

AS was indicated at the close of our last study, we have in the passage for our consideration to-day, chap. 5: v. 11—6: v. 20, *a long and impressive parenthesis*; a parenthesis which not only serves to illustrate the poise and calm deliberation of the writer (who, by the way, is one of the most systematic of all the Bible writers) but also helps to make still more emphatic the importance that he attaches to the central theme of his book, the Ideal Priesthood of Jesus Christ. From the very beginning of the Epistle our author has been moving grandly on with stately steppings to this one thought that has ravished his own heart and about which he burns to speak. He feels deeply, however, that it is a matter of the utmost importance that the subject shall be so presented to his readers as that they shall be willing and able to receive it. To this end he has been gradually preparing their minds and hearts. Time and again he has lifted the veil for a moment, and let them have a glimpse of the glory. Once he

spoke of One who, "having made purification for sin, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high." Again in bursting rapture he exclaimed, "But we see him crowned with glory and honor"; and again, "Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, who was faithful in all his house." And, just in the verses before our present study, he said, "Christ is as good as Aaron; with human sympathy and divine appointment." And now the mention of Christ's divine appointment to the priesthood is used to open the way to a statement of His superiority to Aaron; for His divine appointment is declared by the fact that God has said of Him:

"Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek."

The writer is now face to face with his great subject; but, impressed with its supreme importance and distressed by the inert spiritual condition of his readers, *he pauses in this long parenthesis to rebuke them for their sluggishness and lack of growth in the Christian life, to urge them on to maturity, to warn them of the awful consequences of apostacy, and to encourage them to go on to full assurance of faith, seeing that their faith is based upon promises that cannot fail.* Having referred to Christ in vs. 9 and 10 as "the author of eternal salvation; named of God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek," our

author goes on to write, "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing" (v. 11). Either of two things may make a subject "hard of interpretation." The subject may be in itself a dark, mysterious problem, hard to understand for one's self and difficult to interpret to others; or the subject may be comparatively simple in itself, but those to whom you would explain it be unprepared for and unable to understand it. A very simple problem in Algebra would be "hard of interpretation" to an A B C class. They are not yet ready for it. Recognizing such a truth, Jesus once said to His disciples, "I have many things to say to you, but ye cannot bear them now." So the writer declares here that he has many things to say about Christ as typified by Melchizedek, but he feels that these things are going to be "hard of interpretation," specially because his readers have "become dull of hearing." He, doubtless, felt that the subject was in itself rather a mystical theme; but in this case the difficulty of interpretation was terribly aggravated by the dullness of his readers. Seeing that Melchizedek is only mentioned twice in all of the Old Testament records, and that too so briefly, it might seem, indeed, a great problem to make it appear that he is the type of a priest superior to Aaron, and greater than Abraham. For 1600 years Aaron and his successors had stood

by divine appointment before the mercy-seat in the Great Temple of Jehovah in behalf of the Jewish nation; while Abraham's honored position as the father of the faithful was one of solitary grandeur. Can it be that one like Melchizedek is superior to them? But whatever difficulty the problem itself may have presented, *it is clear that "dullness of apprehension" on the part of these Hebrew Christians is the chief obstacle in the writer's mind.* Once they had had greater quickness and readiness of perception. Their minds had once been open to receive new truths, and their appetite for spiritual things had once been keen. Once they were anxious to find out and were willing to put forth honest effort to understand the things of Christ; but now, alas, they have "become dull of hearing."

Their dullness, too, is entirely their own fault. They are not young children in the faith, just rescued from the bondage of sin, not having had time yet to have learned the higher truths of Christianity. In that case it would have been un-Christlike to have censured them. In that case there would have been one paramount duty resting upon all older Christians, i. e. to bear patiently with these lambs of the flock and to lead gently these little ones of Christ. *Ofttimes the professed followers of the Master have expected too much of young Christians, blaming them for doing many things in their early Chris-*

tian life, which later on would be laid aside as maturity of thought and life come. It is not to be expected that the babe in Christ will manifest all of the signs of maturity and none of the signs of infancy, any more than that the physical boy or girl of ten years will manifest all of the marks of calm, dignified middle life and none of the features of youth. But the case of these Hebrew Christians, whom the writer has definitely in mind, is not the case of those who have just recently entered into faith. Here we have people who have been Christians for many years, but have not used the means of grace; people who ought to be well advanced in maturity of Christian knowledge and experience. *Their conduct has justly exposed them to censure.* "For when by reason of the time," i. e. since you were converted, "ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (vs. 12-14). So long a time has it been since they were converted, some of them doubtless having been converted forty years before, i. e. on the day of Pentecost (cf.

chap. 3: v. 9) that by now they ought to have progressed so far as to be teachers of others; instead of that it is necessary that "some one"—perhaps any kind of a mature Christian could do it—teach them "the rudiments of the first principles," the very A B C's of the Christian faith. Through their indolence and neglect of the means of grace, through discouragement from opposition and persecution, through allowing the ritualism and forms of an old faith to reassert their fascinating power, they have lost their spiritual appetite and have become like people in a second childhood, in their dotage. They have "become such as have need of milk and not of solid food."

There is nothing praiseworthy or pious in this desire of some so-called mature Christians that they should always be fed with milk. On the contrary, as Professor Bruce says, "We have here in this passage an assertion of the right of the church to be something more than an infant school." Sometimes when people keep asking for "the simple things of the Gospel," it is simply an evidence of laziness. It is hard work to think deeply and broadly and thoroughly. Some people don't want to work that way. More people seem anxious barely to be saved than are willing to build gold, silver and precious stones upon the foundation Christ Jesus. More people seem willing to become the professed followers

of Christ than are willing to heed Paul's advice to young Timothy, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth." More people quote, "We are saved by grace: it is the gift of God," than earnestly consider Paul's injunction to the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that worketh in you both to will and to work of his good pleasure." We must see to it that we "grow in grace" and "strive to attain to the fullness of the stature of Christ." We must remember that if we are to have fruits, we must have roots; and if we are to enrich the fruits we must nourish the roots. We ought to desire to be not only branches upon the vine of Christ, but fruit-bearing branches. Indeed, unless we do become fruit-bearing branches, He said that we shall be "cut off." This is just the danger here in the case of these Hebrew Christians, as will become manifest in a few verses. Unless we go forward, we shall slide backward. Nothing here is stationary. We shall become either better or worse. If we are to have a larger, fuller, deeper knowledge of Christ, and have our own faith strengthened and our own lives built up; *then we must be willing to pay the price.* "As a rule inadequate Christian knowledge is the result of a defect in Christian earnestness," and a neglect of the means of

grace open to all believers. "For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness." This desire for milk is often the clearest kind of evidence that no growth has been made in Christian living or spiritual knowledge. "For he is a babe. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil." Nor is there any other way by which one can get away from babyhood into maturity of Christian thought and life, with ability to discern what is helpful and upbuilding, than by constant exercise in Christian thinking and living. If physical exercise is necessary for the increase of physical strength as well as for the retention of the strength already possessed, even more so is it true in the realm of the spiritual. These Hebrew Christians by ceasing to use the means of grace have not only failed to grow, but they have begun to lose that which they once possessed. *These have begun to illustrate the law of all life, "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."*

On account, then, of the undesirability and the peril of their relapsed, sluggish state, and on account of the writer's desire to push on to the great theme of "Christ as Melchizedek priest," we have the exhortation of chap. 6: vs. 1-3, "Wherefore, leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection"

(or full growth, as in the margin); "not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the teaching of baptisms" (or washings, as in the margin), "and of the laying on of hands, and of the resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit." Shall the writer give up his burning desire to teach these Hebrew Christians about the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, and give his time to the teaching of these rudiments? "*No, any one can do that.*" Moreover, from his point of view and from the peculiar state of these Hebrew Christians, "it is indispensable that they should advance." *Unless they can be made to see the glory of the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, Judaism will prove too strong for them, and their Christian faith will be entirely lost.* Of what use will it have been for the writer to have shown the superiority of Christ to prophets and to angels, to Moses and to Joshua, if he cannot also prove that Christ is a God-appointed priest superior to Aarón? *This is the vital question before the minds of these priest-fascinated, sacrifice-hungry, ceremonial-bound Hebrew Christians.* If he fails to make them appreciate this point, all is lost. For as Professor Bruce says, "The priesthood of Christ in its reality and ideal worth is not understood, unless it is seen to be of the Melchizedek type."

"Wherefore, leaving the doctrine of the first

principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection." He does not mean in any way to disparage first principles, or to minimize the importance of a clear understanding of these elemental doctrines that he mentions. He means that we are to leave them, as one leaves the A B C book to go on into the First Reader and on into the Second Reader, etc. He means to leave them as the builder leaves the foundation to build upon it the superstructure. *We have to-day many Christians who never get beyond "the doctrine of the first principles of Christ."* Their Christian lives are *like the teeth of a saw*, up and down, up and down; but never further up than before; revived in winter, fall back in summer; and then ditto the next year; and so on "as they pass through this dismal vale of tears." Bah! Let us leave these A B C's and pass on to mature things. *We have many "cellar-Christians,"* who have never done more than build a foundation; and, poor things! they live in the cellar. Perhaps when they began to build, they had not counted the cost. Then we have other Christians who have built a one-story house upon the foundation. They are "one-story Christians," but, thank God, they don't live in the cellar! Then we have "two-story Christians," and some "four-story Christians," and some magnificent "sky-scrapers." If we are living in the cellar, let us leave the doctrine of the first principles of Christ and

press on to maturity. There is no law "against high buildings" in the spiritual world. *Build as high as by the grace of God you can go.* The higher up you go, the nearer you'll be to Him. *You have no business to live down there, if you can build higher.*

"Wherefore, leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on to perfection." Our author is determined to go on to these higher things; he exhorts his readers to do the same. To attain to "perfection" is "always to be in the position of having reached the end; but the end in the present instance is not training for an office" (as in the case of Christ's perfection in 2:10 and 5:9), "or purgation of the conscience from the guilt of sin, but the attainment of manhood, with the characteristics named" in 5:14. "Not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God," etc., etc. The various subjects that are here mentioned probably formed the basis of instruction in the "converts' classes" of the early church, or the "catechumenate," as it was then called. Nor are these doctrines exclusively Christian. Converted Jews should have been familiar with the most of them before conversion, at least in their elements; *these long-time Christians should certainly have been far beyond such doctrines by now.* Understanding that they do know the foundations and have laid

them wisely and well, our writer proposes not to lay them over again, but to press on to higher things. By "repentance from dead works" and by "faith toward God," he means that change of mind by which the Jew came to see the uselessness of those works which the artificial and servile legalism of the Old Testament required of him, the powerlessness of his own righteousness, and the necessity of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. By "the teaching of baptisms," or washings as in the margin, the writer refers to the instruction which was necessary to help young Christians, as Dr. Farrar puts it, "to discriminate between Jewish washings and Christian baptism." By the teaching "of the laying on of hands" reference is made to that instruction which made clear the meaning of the "laying on of hands" in the ordination of Christian pastors and possibly in the reception of believers into the church. The teaching concerning "the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment" also occupied a prominent place in these early Christian lessons.

But it will be necessary for these tempted Hebrew Christians to go far beyond these rudimentary things, if they are to be victorious over the seductive influences of Judaism. If only they can be made clearly to understand the glorious Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, all of these hankerings after the old covenant will cease. Wherefore, let us go on to maturity, leaving the A B C's, and not laying

over again the foundation. "And this will we do, if God permit." The writer's purpose to go on is not dependent upon the sluggish condition of those to whom he is writing. *He is resolved to go on*; though as a Christian man he recognizes his dependence upon God and the uncertainty of the future; hence he adds in the expression of his purposes the reverent words, "if God permit"; just as often to-day we write in declaring our future course D. V. (*deo volente*, God being willing). *And why is he so resolved to do all that is within his power to lead them from babyhood and rudimentary things into maturity, into a realizing sense of the glory of the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ?* Evidently because he feels that if they do not go forward, they will become weaker and weaker in their Christian faith and practice, the inducements of Judaism will become more and more powerful over them, and they will be in the most imminent peril of apostatizing altogether from the faith. *Surely the law of life is that when we cease to grow we begin to die. Nowhere is this law more inevitable than in the higher life.* "Stagnation of religious life and thought was likely to end in death." We must grow; or we begin a process which, if continued, will eventually culminate in death.

"For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were

made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God; but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned. But beloved we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak" (vs. 4-9). These verses form one of the most familiar passages in all of the Epistles of the New Testament; a passage over which for centuries theologians both Arminian and Calvinistic have vigorously contended; a passage which has often greatly distressed the truly pious, and has seemed to pronounce hopeless doom upon the hardened backslider. It is admitted on all sides that the passage is a difficult one to interpret; and yet there are some things to be said which tend greatly to simplify the problem. *There are three things that need to be kept in mind when we come to the study of such a difficult passage of Scripture as this. We need to find out to whom and of whom the writer is speaking, exactly what he says, and what thought or idea the readers*

probably received from what was said. In order to find out to whom and of whom the writer is speaking we shall need to study the context, both immediate and remote, and study the description of the persons intended as given by the writer himself. How much of Scripture has been given a perverted sense, because of a lack of study of the context! When the Bible is treated as a catechism of doctrine instead of a record of an historical revelation, what mischief follows in many instances! Of course, there are hundreds of sayings in the Bible the meaning of which is in no way affected by the context; sayings, which when printed upon cards, or tracts, or used as isolated texts, have been powerfully blessed of God, and always will be, to the salvation of the lost, and to the upbuilding of Christians. But there are other sayings of Scripture, deeply imbedded in an historical revelation, that we dare not wrest from the context and interpret apart from the relation in which the Holy Spirit placed them. What God has joined together we dare not thus put asunder.

"To whom and of whom is the writer speaking?" The remote context is the whole Epistle to the Hebrews, which is unquestionably addressed to Hebrew Christians; people who once gave earnest heed to this great salvation, who have been real Christians for many years and who had in earlier days endured a great fight of afflic-

tions for Christ's sake; but now are in danger of neglecting this great salvation, are in danger of missing the rest of God and need to be urged on to hold fast their boldness and the glorying of their hope firm unto the end. The immediate context is the parenthesis beginning with 5:11 and ending with 6:20, in which the writer is still addressing either these tempted Hebrew Christians as a whole, or else a portion of this Hebrew company of believers. He describes them in the immediate context as people who were once keen in spiritual things, but have now become "dull of hearing"; who have been long enough in the way to have become by now the "teachers" of others, but who instead of that are "such as have need of milk and not of meat"; whose genuine conversion is not for a moment questioned; concerning whose foundation he is not at all solicitous. The whole force of the first part of the parenthesis seems to turn just on this point, that they have indeed wisely and well laid the foundation, but they have acted as if the foundation were everything. They have gone no further. They need to go on unto maturity. *There seems to be no question at all in either the near or the remote context that the writer, from all that has been said by him thus far, has in mind those who have the heart of the matter in them, who are really and truly Christians; but are tempted Hebrew Christians in the midst of a peculiarly perilous*

state such as has been so often heretofore described. Such is the evidence of both the remote and immediate context.

What, now, is the description that the writer himself gives of the persons concerning whom he speaks? They are described as "those who were once enlightened." To what thought can this refer except to the thought that "the God of this world hath blinded the minds of those that believe not," but "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ? They are further described as those who "tasted the heavenly gift." The writer does not use the word "taste" in a trivial or light sense, for he has told us in another place of God's plan that Christ should "taste death for every man," not nibble at death or make a feint at death, but actually experience its very essence. It is by tasting a thing that we learn its real character. So these people whom he is describing "tasted the heavenly gift." Christ spoke to the woman of Samaria of "the gift of God," which, if she had known, she would have asked of Him, and He would have given her the "living water." Paul speaks in Romans of "the free gift," and again of "the gift of righteousness," referring to justification; and again in 2 Corinthians of Christ as God's "unspeakable gift." These people have

actually had a real experience of the heavenly gift, have "tasted that the Lord is gracious." They also "were made partakers of the Holy Spirit." Not only the illumination of conversion has been theirs, but also the infilling of the Holy Spirit and the daily "earnest of the inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." They also have "tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come." The first phrase can mean nothing less than a vital experience of the preciousness of the promises of God's truth; they have known the joy of resting the heart upon the Word. The "age to come" is used here as in chap. 2: 5 of the Messianic age, already inaugurated by Christ Himself and in this sense translated "the age that is come"; this kingdom that has been already established is to be carried on to a grand culmination and in this sense it is described as "the age to come." "The powers of the age to come" refers probably to the revelation of God in Christ, to the manifestations of Pentecost, and to the triumphs of the cross; though some have thought that we have here a reference to the special "gifts" of the Apostolic age. *To me, it seems perfectly evident that the writer refers in all of these phrases to those who are really Christians.* As Dr. Farrar says, "Nothing can be clearer than the fact that, but for dogmatic prepossessions, no one would have dreamed of explaining

them to mean anything less than full conversion."

Let me quote here at some length a passage from R. W. Dale: "I know not how he could have chosen expressions which more forcibly describe the possession of a real and genuine Christian life. Phrase is heaped upon phrase that there may be no misapprehension. Not only do the expressions themselves compel me to believe that the writer is thinking of those whose Christian life had been a reality—not a delusion—the place of this passage in his appeal," i. e., the immediate context as indicated above, "confirms me in this persuasion. He is exhorting the people who are thus described to make progress in Christian knowledge and character. Had they been self-deceived,—had they been hypocrites,—he would have charged them, not to "go on unto perfection," but, now at last, to begin a real and honest Christian life. He is warning them against "falling away." If their whole religious life had been a deception, it would have been impossible for them to fall away from Christ's service, for they would never have been truly in it. It is by appealing to the dreadful results of the apostacy into which they are drifting that he endeavors to raise them to intensest earnestness. Had he supposed they were hypocrites or self-deceived, he would have had no need to tell them of the ruin which

threatened them if they grew worse; he would have startled and terrified them by awful disclosures of their present guilt, their present dangers, and told them that they were condemned already." This presentation of the case by Dr. Dale seems to me to cover the probable facts. In answer, then, to the question, "To whom and of whom is the writer speaking?" we are compelled to say that "*Remote context, immediate context, and the strong descriptive terms used by the writer himself all indicate that he has in mind those who have been really and truly converted.*"

The second question that we need to answer is, "*Exactly what does he say?*" Much harm has been done by misquoting Scripture, as well as by wresting Scripture from its context. We need to find out just exactly what a writer says. This is our justification for using the Revised Version in our study instead of the Old Version. The Revised Version is based upon more accurate Greek texts than were at the disposal of scholars when the so-called "Authorized Version" was made; and the Revised Version is a more accurate translation of the meaning of the original Greek. *It is nearer "the Bible as God gave it" than the Old Version. It is indeed "the older version," for it is nearer the original Greek.* Of course for many of the dear, familiar and much loved passages of Scripture no translation can improve upon the beautiful English translation

of the Authorized Version; but when we come to the study of a difficult passage where so much may turn upon the tense of a verb, as in this case, we need to get, if we cannot use the Greek and use it intelligently, the very best translation possible. The best English translation now before the public is the American Revised Version. Again let us ask the question, "*Exactly what does the writer say?*" "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and fell away." All of these verbs are in what is called the aorist tense, which expresses a definite action in past time. If I wished to say, "I ate my breakfast yesterday," referring to it as to a definite act in past time, I should express it in the Greek in the aorist tense. The translation, "if they shall fall away," is not accurate. There is no conditional particle in the Greek, but the word "fall away" is in the same construction as the other verbs. All of the verbs are in the accusative case, the accusative of specification. The word "fall away" cannot refer to mere backsliding, but must refer here to deliberate, definite, and complete apostacy from the faith. As touching people who have definitely in past time had all of the experiences above mentioned *and have fallen*

away, "it is impossible to renew them again to repentance."

Impossible for whom? Does he really mean *impossible*? Or does he mean it would be very difficult? He seems to be able generally very clearly to express his thoughts; he is evidently a master of language. He says impossible; and evidently means what he says. *Impossible for whom?* He does not say. Some have thought that he is speaking solely from his own personal point of view; and that he means to say, and has this only in mind, that so far as his purpose in writing is concerned and so far as the opportunities within his present reach are concerned, he cannot spend his time in laying over foundations, or doing primary work. He is resolved to push on to the great subject of the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ. Others have thought that he means that it is impossible for the church in the use of the ordinary means of grace to renew such to repentance. "What is impossible with men," however, "is possible with God." Men can't accomplish it; nothing but a miracle could do that. Others think that he refers to God in the word "impossible." Even for God Himself "it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." I think that this fact is true in the case described, that it is impossible even for God Himself to renew such as are here in the writer's mind again to repentance; but it is a ques-

tion whether the writer in his thought goes beyond human agency. Westcott says of this point: "The use of the active voice limits the strict application of the words to human agency. This is all that comes within the range of the writer's argument." By "repentance" he does not mean the light sense of the word, as it is often used in popular speech, but biblical repentance, which means a complete change of mind and conduct with regard to the most real things of life, with regard to God, self, sin, salvation and Christ.

With reference to those who have had all of the above mentioned experiences "and have fallen away it is impossible to renew them again to repentance." *Why? Because they have spurned the offers of grace and God has slammed the door of mercy in their faces? He does not say so.* The change from the aorist participle to the present participle is very striking in the Greek, and is clearly brought out in the Revised Version. "It is impossible to renew them again to repentance; *seeing they crucify*" (or the margin reads, "the while they crucify," as long as they crucify) "to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame," the present participle expressing always continuous action, state or condition. As Dr. Farrar says, "He does not say that the Hebrews *have* so fallen away; nor does he directly assert that any true

convert *can* fall away; but he does say that *when such apostacy occurs* and—a point of extreme importance which is constantly overlooked—*so long as it lasts*, a vital renewal is *impossible*." *The impossibility lies not in the impatience of God, but in the state of the people described. They by their continued apostacy, and it is only continued apostacy that he has in mind, make a renewing to repentance impossible.* So long as men cling to such a sin, repentance is out of the question. Those who deliberately apostatize from the faith and continue in this state, are joining the foes of righteousness who crucified the Lord Jesus, and are really driving again the nails into His hands and feet, and crucifying unto themselves, unto their own destruction, the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame. They are like land that has received many, many blessings, but continues to bring forth nothing but thorns and briars, which of course if it continues to do so, must sooner or later be rejected.

Thus with awful faithfulness does our writer paint the *inevitable consequences of willful and continued apostacy, an apostacy the seeds of which* he now sees in the cooling ardor and sluggish condition of the tempted Hebrew Christians. *He wished them to see that the road upon which they had begun to travel would lead if they continued to follow it to the bitter end, into utter ruin.* This

is the impression that he wished to make, and that we believe his words could not have failed to make upon them.

But some of you are not yet satisfied, because I have insisted upon close exegesis and have not been willing to become a theologian and answer your question, which will not down: "Do you really think it *possible* for one who has truly been born again to apostatize forever from the faith and miss the heavenly rest? In answer to your question I adopt once more the words of Dr. Dale, whose very brief discussion of this passage is still very convincing: "I dare not obliterate the tremendous force of this passage," and I may add, the tremendous force of the whole book, "by denying *the possibility*. Far better leave it as it is—an awful hypothesis—to warn us against the danger and the guilt, than venture by fine drawn speculations, to diminish its practical power. If you ask me how I can reconcile the possibility which seems implied in the passage as it stands, with the merciful promises which assure us of God's keeping if we trust Him, I answer that these promises are to those who trust, and continue to trust, in God—not to those who trusted once, but whose trust has now perished; and I answer farther, that I would rather be charged by a whole council of theologians with introducing scientific inconsistency into a theological system, than dare to lessen the

terror of a divinely inspired warning, the undiminished awfulness of which may be needed to save some soul from death."

But do not allow the tempter longer to discourage any of you by *misquoting* to you this verse, and telling you that *you have crucified* the Son of God afresh, and that therefore you cannot be renewed unto repentance. The *misquotation of Scripture is one of Satan's old tricks*. The impossibility here spoken of is only of those who have crucified *and continue to crucify* the Son of God afresh. If some past deed or thought of yours seems to you like the crime described as crucifying Christ afresh, turn away from it at once and come confidently in penitence to Him who said, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no case cast out." It is written in the book, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But if you continue to crucify Him afresh, remember His saying, "Apart from me, severed from me, ye can do nothing." You cannot be a Christian without Christ.

"But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak; for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward His name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister. And we desire that each one of you may show the same

diligence unto the fullness of hope even to the end; that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (vs. 9-12). Our author does not say that these Hebrew Christians have fallen away, nor that they will fall away. On the contrary, he states his strong hope for better things in their case; though he has had many misgivings about them and has felt it to be a very wise and necessary thing to warn them of the fatal result of continuous apostacy. In encouraging them he uses the affectionate word "beloved," which occurs nowhere else in this long letter, that he may impress them with the thought that, if he has seemed to them to be severe and stern in his warning words, he has had the desire only to speak the truth in love. His hope for their future is grounded in their past and present life of Christlike service. In spite of the dangers which have been so terribly suggested to his mind by their sluggish spiritual condition, our author manifests that splendid optimism of Christ and the New Testament writers in believing all things and hoping all things. However much they may have failed to progress in their knowledge of spiritual things and failed to appreciate the glory and finality of the religion of Jesus, their lives have manifested much of the true Christian spirit; and life after all is the ultimate argument. God would surely not forget their past services

nor their present love; but would be specially gracious to them and lead them gently amid all their many trials. He will not forget the cup of cold water given to a disciple. *To-day is built on yesterday and to-morrow is built upon both yesterday and to-day; their past life and their present conduct furnish good basis for hope with reference to the future.* It would seem evident that people were a good ways off from crucifying Christ afresh, who in the past had served as these had served, and still were lovingly ministering in spite of ridicule and opposition to the friends of Jesus. "Had these Hebrews really been apostates, or on the point of becoming such, they would have hated, not loved, their former brethren; they would have addicted themselves to the bad work of persecuting believers in Jesus, rather than to the blessed work of ministering to the necessities of the saints. Renegades are ever the most ruthless persecutors."

But our author is very desirous that those who in the past have manifested such a Christian spirit and still show signs of the Christ-life in them, shall manifest equal earnestness in the development of their faith and hope. *Action alone is not sufficient, nor can it be long maintained amid the discouragements and trials of life, unless there is present in the heart the constant inspiration of a strong faith and hope.* These will be greatly needed throughout this whole

period of discipline and peril; moreover, it is only through the strengthening of these that you Hebrew Christians can get out of your sluggish condition, and become the imitators of the magnificent men and women of all ages, who have made their lives sublime, and who through faith and patient endurance have entered into the realization of the promises of God. *The faith and hope of these saints of old were well grounded, too, in the sure promises of God. You, who are Christ's, are the heirs also of these same promises.* They are entirely worthy of your fullest faith and your confident hope. You can't afford to be half-hearted and sluggish with reference to them. They are as certain as the word and oath of God can make them. "For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could swear by none greater, he swore by himself, saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men swear by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; which we

have as an anchor of the soul, *a hope* both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil; whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (vs. 13-20). These promises, which through faith and patient endurance I would have you inherit, are as sure as the word and oath of God can make them. The original promise was given by God to Abraham; who is an illustrious example of those who by this necessary way, i. e., through faith and patient endurance, have entered into the inheritance. Let us recall for a moment that wonderful history. God had promised Abraham that he should be the father of a great nation, when as yet he had no child. Abraham believed God and waited patiently. When at last a son was born, it seemed to be probable that the promise would be fulfilled. *Then there came a great test of the patriarch's faith*; he was to offer his son, his only son, the only visible hope for the realization of the promise, upon an altar of sacrifice. *But his faith did not waver*. Taking his boy, the wood, the fire, and his knife, the grand old patriarch began to ascend the mountain of sacrifice. As they trudged along up the mountain side the boy said to his father: "My father; behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" It must have been with an awful struggle in his soul that the patriarch

answered: "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." "So they went both of them together. And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son" (Gen. 22: 8-10). Then it was that, for the first time as recorded in Scripture, God is represented as binding Himself by an oath to keep his promise to the patriarch. Then it was that Jehovah is represented as being aroused to the highest pitch of admiration by such a thrilling spectacle of sublime faith. "And the angel of Jehovah called unto Abraham a second time out of heaven and said, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the sea shore" (Gen. 22: 15-17).

It is to this historic incident that our author here refers. These promises that were given to Abraham God not only spoke, but *He confirmed them with an oath*. There was none greater than Himself by whom He could swear; and so, using the customary Jewish formula of oath, God said to him: "Surely blessing, I will bless thee

and multiplying I will multiply thee." And Abraham when he had "patiently endured obtained the promise." God confirmed these promises with an oath; for this is the way men settle disputes, and make emphatic the trustworthiness of a statement. When a man swears to a thing, we ought to have confidence in it. So God, wishing to make very plain to Abraham and to you and to all the heirs of the promise the certainty and reliability of His purpose, condescended to mediate, i. e., to become, as it were, a third party between Himself and Abraham, by adding "an oath," that by two "immutable things," i. e., by His word and His oath, "in which it was impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement," i. e., we may have double reason for confident faith and a well grounded hope; we "who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us," even as one in olden time fled into the cities of refuge, even as one seizes a prize at the end of a race course; a hope "which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil," for the Christian's anchor of hope "is not dropped into any earthly sea, but passes as it were through the depths of the aërial ocean, mooring us to the very throne of God." The basis of our hope is the word and the oath of God, which are as certain as the character and the throne of the Almighty. Our

anchor holds within the veil, made fast in the very Holy of Holies "whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." By the phrases "entering into that which is within the veil, whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," our author most skillfully, yet with almost tragic suddenness, brings us at once face to face again with all of the impressive imagery of the Temple service, speaks in an anticipatory way of Christ as our forerunner in the Holy of Holies, a thought which he will later on develop, and ends his long parenthesis just where he began it with Jesus who has become "a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek."

Thus the long parenthesis has consisted of a sharp rebuke of these Hebrew Christians for their sluggishness and lack of progress in Christian knowledge (chap. 5, vs. 11-14); an earnest exhortation to go on to maturity of thought (chap. 6, vs. 1-3); a fearful warning against the fatal consequences of continuous apostacy (vs. 4-8); words of encouragement to full assurance of hope and to the inheritance of the promises through faith and patient endurance (vs. 9-12); these promises being worthy of such hope and faith and patient endurance, since they have been made doubly sure by God's word and God's oath,

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and since Christ our forerunner has entered for us "within the veil, a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (vs. 13-20).

Just before we close this long and difficult study, let us note for a moment the thought that "through faith and patient endurance" we "inherit the promises." It is said that Abraham "having patiently endured obtained the promise" (v. 15), and these Hebrew Christians and all Christians are urged to become imitators of those who through faith and patience (or better, patient endurance) inherit the promise. How did Abraham obtain the promise? He did not live to see his seed as the sand upon the seashore, or as the stars for multitude; but he did see at the end of his faith and patient endurance Isaac restored to him from the altar, raised as it were from the dead. And then and there there must have shot through Abraham's soul the strong conviction, which never again left him, that God would surely keep His promise to him, though it should be necessary, as it were, to raise one from the dead. Through his absolute faith and patient endurance the promise became a reality to him. *So we also here and now through faith and patient endurance may enter into the possession of many of his sure promises.* For instance, he says: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." How shall we make

this promise our own possession? We take it to our own hearts and lives, we apply it to others for years, we test it in joy and sorrow, we never find it to fail; and after years of "faith and patient endurance" it becomes our own possession. We have even here in a very real sense entered into our inheritance. Take one more case: We read, "All things work together for good to them that love God." How do we make it our own? By living with strong faith in it, applying it in our own lives and to the lives of others; and after many varied experiences of joy and sorrow it becomes a very part of our beings, our own possession. You would have to cut the very heart out of some of us, if you would find how deeply it has become embedded in our very selfhood. It is ours. We have inherited the promises. So let us all not be sluggish, listless or half-hearted, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises. *If true, they are grandly true, gloriously true, and worthy of our fullest faith.*

Light from the Monuments



Before we take up the writer's argument concerning the priesthood of Christ as typified by Melchizedek, an argument which runs throughout the seventh chapter of Hebrews, it is desirable that we should take one hour just at this point to consider certain pressing questions about the character of the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, from which the writer of the one hundred and tenth Psalm drew his type of Messianic priesthood in the passages which our author so skillfully uses with these Hebrew Christians. When we come to examine to-day such a presumably early record as that of Gen. 14, we are at once confronted with the critical question, "Is this chapter reliable history, or is it fiction?" for the historicity and reliability of the heretofore accepted historical material of the Old Testament is in our day and generation severely questioned. This state of mental unrest on the part of some, and the desire to strengthen and help all, lead me to make just here what may seem to some to be an unwarrantable digression in our Studies in Hebrews, though it will be a digression which

will aid us in our consideration of the Melchizedek argument, and increase our interest and faith in the Old Testament Scriptures, from which our author, and in fact all of the New Testament writers, quotes so frequently and so powerfully. Let me call this digression, "*Light from the Monuments.*"¹

Let us begin with this striking statement by Prof. Price: "One hundred years ago there was not a single document contemporaneous with the Old Testament known to be in existence." Herodotus was called "The Father of History," and the known history of the world, outside of the records of the Old Testament, began with the history of Greece and Rome, about four hundred years before Christ, i. e., this known history began at about the time when Malachi, the last prophet of the Old Testament, lived and wrote. To be sure, it was claimed that Greek and Roman history began several centuries before this, but this supposed history is now regarded as more or less mythical, while the writings ascribed to Josephus, Berosus, etc., claiming to

¹ For helpful thoughts, frequent quotations, and original material the author is indebted most of all to Prof. Ira M. Price's "The Monuments and the Old Testament," and some to Prof. A. H. Sayce's "The Higher Critics and the Monuments." Also it is perhaps well to state that for three years it was his own privilege to study at Yale in the original languages the Babylonian and Assyrian records.

relate history from a remote past, do not stand the test of modern critical processes. The whole period of time, then, covered by the writings of the Old Testament lay beyond the date of the beginning of known history, so far as outside sources made this history known. *Thus the Old Testament as a supposedly historical record stood entirely alone one hundred years ago, with no outside documents either to confirm or to refute its statements.* The scientific skeptic of that day would say to the believer: "You can believe in the historicity and reliability of those Old Testament writings if you choose; but as for me I refuse to believe in anything on the basis of a single witness. There are no other witnesses to prove the trustworthiness of the testimony given in the Old Testament. It's like a man going into some far country where no other traveler has ever been; he can come back from that faraway land, and tell all sorts of stories of what he saw and did there, and no one can successfully prove him to be a false witness. He alone was there. This appears to me to be the case of the Old Testament. Specially would I be led to disbelieve in and to doubt the truthfulness of this lone traveler, if he told stories of strange, unnatural, and apparently miraculous happenings. Now there are those stories about Joseph, that supposed history of the so-called bondage in Egypt and of the Exodus, those wars with those Assy-

rian kings with their unpronounceable names, that tale about the invasion of Sennacherib, those stories of Daniel, that decree of Cyrus about permitting the return of the Jews from captivity; all of those things look to me like pretty big stories. I confess to you that I am unwilling to believe in such things, and in the supposedly historical character of the books that record them, simply on the basis of their own testimony, with no corroborating witnesses." *By taking this position one hundred years ago the skeptic had the believer rather "on the hip"; for no sufficient answer could at that time be given to such a challenge.*

In more recent times the skeptical position with reference to the Old Testament has been somewhat shifted. As Professor Sayce says: "The destructive critic has usually started with a conviction of the modernness of the application of writing to literature in the true sense of the word. Classical scholars had impressed upon him the belief that literature as such had no existence before the age of Solon, or even of the Persian wars. It therefore became impossible to conceive of a Samuel, or still less of a Moses, sitting down to compile a history and a code or laws." *The modern destructive position is something like this:* Hebrew literature did not come into existence till the end of the eighth or perhaps the middle of the seventh century before Christ. It flourished vigorously in the

days of the Exile, and after the return of the Jews from the captivity of Babylon. Along in these years of national decadence a company of writers arose, who wished to "write up" the supposedly glorious past history of the Jewish nation. All ancient nations have had long lists of mythical kings and heroes; and their poets and writers have loved to tell in song and story the great deeds of some vanished golden age. So the Jews also had many mythical heroes, and much legendary lore; stories about an old hero named Abraham; stories about a wonderful boy by the name of Joseph; stories of an Egyptian bondage and how God so loved this one nation that He delivered them by many miraculous doings. However despicable this people may be now, living in constant dread of Assyrian or Babylonian, or serving as captives upon the canals of the great city that Nebuchadnezzar built, it was not always thus. *Once they had a glorious history.* To make this supposedly hoary and grand past a living present, encouraging and inspiring to these later and less fortunate Jews, as well as to give an air of historicity to certain alleged promises of a brilliant future, these literary characters of the seventh and later centuries "wrote up" these legends and threw around these mythical characters of Jewish history a web of supposed fact. But in reality there never was any such person as Abraham, or

Melchizedek, or Joseph. There was no Egyptian bondage, and consequently no wonderful deliverance. Few, if any, of the things recorded in these supposedly early and historical books ever actually took place; or, if indeed there was any basis for the stories in actual fact, it was only a very meager basis; and the supposed actual history is largely "idealized history." This is the modern theory of destructive criticism with reference to the supposedly historic Old Testament writings.

Let us bear in mind that, since the Old Testament is not an abstract treatise on theology, nor a catechism of doctrine written apart from the movements of men, but the record of an historical revelation, with very few abstract statements and made up mostly of concrete history, and biography, song and story; a record of how gradually through the centuries God revealed truth to men through living men and women and the movements of history; if we can find reliable documents of contemporaneous men and events, customs and cities, we ought to be able to test the Old Testament records as to their probable historicity by comparing such points. Within the last century a large amount of such contemporaneous literature has come to light; and the irresistible question at once suggests itself, "What light does this material give upon the Old Testament records?"

All through the land of Egypt along the banks of the Nile are the ruins of magnificent temples and royal tombs, pyramids, sphinxes and obelisks; which, as travelers for centuries had noticed, are covered with a strange sort of marking, and with odd figures, as if perhaps they were a language. These markings had for years aroused the curiosity of passing travelers and the interest of scholars; but no one had been able to find the key to interpret the writings, if such they were, and to unlock the treasures of these hoary ruins. However, in a very unexpected way the clue was found. Like other mighty conquerors, it was Napoleon Bonaparte's ambition to make the conquest of Egypt; but one of the most enduring monuments of his genius in the East was not the founding of an empire but *the accidental discovery by one of his engineers of a remarkable stone*. It was in 1799, just about one hundred years ago, while Napoleon's engineer was excavating at the mouth of the Nile, that this stone was found embedded in the sand. Professor Price thus describes it: "When it had been carefully removed from its bed it was found to be of black granite, three feet nine inches in height by two feet four and one-half inches in width, and eleven inches in thickness. It is thought to have been at least twelve inches higher and to have had a rounded top. On this block could be seen at the top, parts of fourteen

lines of characters resembling those seen everywhere on the obelisks and ruined temples of the land. Adjoining these and below are thirty-two lines of another species of script, while at the bottom are fifty-four lines, twenty-eight of them complete, in Greek capital letters. The Greek was readily readable, and told the story of the stone. It was set up in 195 B. C., by the priests of Egypt assembled at Memphis in honor of Ptolemy Epiphanes, because he had canceled the arrearages of certain taxes due from that sacerdotal body. These grateful priests had ordered their memorial decree to be inscribed in the sacred characters of Egypt, in the vernacular, and in Greek''; even as the inscription above the head of the crucified was in the three languages of the time and place, Greek, Latin and Hebrew, that all that passed by might read and understand. When the purpose of the stone had thus been told by the Greek writing it was natural to suppose that the other inscriptions upon the fallen monument said the same thing as the Greek. If so, here in this three-language inscription was something which some day might furnish a key to the hieroglyphics upon the ruined tombs and temples of Egypt. The stone was therefore carefully copied and packed for shipment; and, coming into the hands of the English through the surrender of Alexandria, was deposited at last in the British Museum, where it is now one of the most

valued and famous treasures of that great institution. Because the stone was found near Rosetta, *it was called the Rosetta stone*; and you may examine it for yourself any day that you may happen to go to the British Museum, where it is carefully preserved in a prominent place under a glass case. For some years various efforts were made to read the other inscriptions upon this remarkable stone, but with little success. Finally, in 1818, Champollion, a French student, already familiar with Coptic, began to study Egyptian; and, by carefully comparing the known Greek writing with the two unknown but supposedly similar inscriptions, he found the key to the hieroglyphic language, and unlocked the treasures of the monuments which for centuries had been as silent as the Sphinx. This reading of the hieroglyphic writing opened up to the world's knowledge a history running back over four thousand years before Christ. If Moses wrote Genesis and the early portions of the Old Testament in the days of the wilderness wanderings, i. e., about 1250 B. C., then the supposedly old writings of the Bible are at least "three thousand years younger than the oldest records of Egyptian history." Moses thus becomes a rather modern writer, and the so-called "legendary, mythical days of the Exodus" become comparatively modern history; for the distance from the Pharaoh of the oppression and the time of the

Exodus, back to the time of Menes, the founder of the first Egyptian dynasty, is said to be as great as the distance from to-day back to the time of the Exodus. For several centuries the children of Israel, according to the Bible records, came into contact with Egypt and Egyptian history; and a careful study of this Egyptian material, revealing as it does the manners and people and happenings of that time, ought to furnish us with accurate knowledge by which we can test the historicity and accuracy of the supposedly historical material of the Old Testament, i. e., so far as it has to do with Egypt.

At about the same time that Champollion, through the decipherment of the Rosetta stone, gave to the world the key to the secrets of Egypt, travelers and scholars were becoming interested in the artificial mounds and the many ruins that were scattered all over the great valley of the Tigris and the Euphrates. It was evident that once a great people had lived here, for ruins of waterworks, towers, temples, and cities were everywhere. Moreover, the heavy rains of the passing years had washed great gullies in these sand piles, and many bricks, strangely ornamented with triangular-shaped markings, had been carried out upon the surface of the plain, which the natives and travelers had preserved merely as mementos and relics. One of these travelers, however, became much interested in

the mounds, and upon examination found them to be full of these sun-dried bricks, covered with these same triangular-shaped markings; many of these bricks and tablets of clay he gathered together and sent to the British Museum. About twenty-five years after this a French consul, who was stationed in this same country, became very enthusiastic over various mounds near by, and employed many men to dig into and examine them. *In one of these mounds he found a room of large dimensions.* "The walls were all wainscoted with sculptured alabaster slabs, upon which he saw a panorama. There were figures of battles, sieges, triumphal processions, hunting scenes, and like events, all in relief. Across the face of many of these were lines of characters, similar to those found on the bits of burnt bricks and alabaster that had been scattered on the plain. Aroused to the highest pitch of excitement and joy, Botta" (for that was the French consul's name) "passed from the first room into others of similar dimensions and ornamentation and figures. *He pushed on and on, until he discovered acres of such chambers, with scores of remarkable figures and colossi.* When he once stopped to think of the antiquity of his finds, he was astonished. He faced a new race. A new-old civilization gazed upon him from every slab of alabaster, and from every giant colossus. In fact, he seemed to be walking

in a dreamland, inhabited by gods, fairies and colossi, by demons and dragons." And all those strange triangular-shaped markings, is that a language? If we could read what the writing, if it is a writing, says; could we then understand what all this panorama means, whose palace this was, when these people lived, and what they were and did? These were some of the things that surged through Botta's brain as he wandered here and there amid these palatial ruins that he had laid bare. His discovery aroused the whole learned world, and *tremendous interest was awakened in Oriental excavation and research*. Both the French and English sent out expeditions, and the Louvre in Paris and the British Museum in London became the possessors of thousands of these strangely-marked sun-dried bricks and tablets, and of many colossi bulls and figures of heroic size that had been stationed at temple gates or adorned palaces of kings.

One of these expeditions was sent out by the House of Commons under the direction of *Henry Layard, who, among other things, uncovered mighty Nineveh*, where, forgotten, she had been *buried for more than twenty centuries*. When Xenophon, nearly two thousand years before, had passed by this neighborhood with his ten thousand Greeks, they noted the mighty mounds, but knew not what they meant; mighty Nineveh

having so miserably perished and having been so soon forgotten that no one knew just what pile of sand covered her remains. But Henry Layard dug her out of the sand and discovered here also the mighty palace of Sennacherib. "This palace covered, according to the traces of foundations laid bare by Layard, an area of eight acres—about four ordinary city blocks—and contained more than seventy rooms of various dimensions. This, as the other palaces discovered, was lined with inscriptions and figures picturing events at home and abroad."

Later on, in the seventies, George Smith was sent by one of the London newspapers to old Assyria to see what he could find; and *Smith discovered among other things*, "*a library of thirty thousand tablets and cylinders*, which had belonged to the collection of Assurbanipal, the last great king of Assyria, a contemporary of Manasseh and Josiah of Judah. The position that these tablets occupied showed that they had been arranged by topics somewhat as we arrange our books on the shelves of our libraries. They were almost all in a good state of preservation." The manner in which these books of antiquity had been preserved is really remarkable. These Assyrian and Babylonian writings, except of course the inscriptions upon palace walls and colossi figures, monuments, or large historical cylinders, are mostly upon little tablets of clay.

When the clay was soft it was moulded into cakes about the size and shape "of an ordinary cake of toilet soap." Upon this soft clay the writer or scribe of the time wrote what he wished to inscribe by pressing into the clay "what appears to have been the corner of a cube," which formed as he drew it out a triangular-shaped impression. These impressions were combined in various ways to form the representation of things, syllables and sounds. When he had finished his writing, the clay tablet was baked hard to preserve the inscription from erasure. Sometimes, also, these little clay tablets were enclosed in an outer clay covering to preserve them from harm. But in the case of the great library of thirty thousand tablets found by George Smith a very fortunate and really remarkable thing seems to have taken place. The library, it is thought, must have occupied the second floor of the building, and when the palace of Assurbanipal was burned the beams supporting the floor were destroyed and the library fell into the basement. Then the outer walls of the palace fell in upon the top of the library, and under the action of the elements bricks, burnt and unburnt, melted together, flowed in and formed over the top a sort of cement covering which guarded the volumes through the slowly-moving centuries until, in the providence of God and through the energy of archæologists and the friends of knowledge

they were discovered by George Smith and brought to the British Museum.

But all of these thousand tablets would convey very little information to men, and these gigantic and magnificent palaces, laid bare to human view by the toil of many workers, would not tell their secrets, unless some one should be able to do for the triangular-shaped markings of these tablets and monuments of the Tigris and the Euphrates what Champollion through the reading of the Rosetta stone had done for the hieroglyphics of Egypt. *This work was actually set in motion by an Englishman, Henry C. Rawlinson, who in 1835 discovered in the Zagros Mountains a very remarkable inscription.* High up upon the almost perpendicular side of a limestone mountain which rose 1700 feet about the plain, 250 feet from the base, Rawlinson could see a large space that had been smoothed off, and upon this smooth place a large bas-relief of a king, "before whom stood a long line of captives bound neck to neck with a rope. Adjacent to this great group were several columns of cuneiform inscriptions. Rawlinson thought that in ancient times there might have been a scaffolding of some kind, so that the passer-by might reach and read the inscriptions; but at this time they were too high and too inaccessible." To get near to these and get a copy of them, that he might study them, was the earnest desire of

Henry Rawlinson's heart. But how would he be able to copy an inscription, on the almost precipitous side of a limestone mountain 1700 feet high and 350 feet above the base, under the constant glare of an oriental sky, and amid the disadvantages and dangers of such a land? At the price of great patience, perseverance, and personal peril, Rawlinson at last got near to the writing and found at its base a ledge fourteen inches wide upon which the workers had stood when the inscription was made. This ledge of only fourteen inches width, a part of which had been entirely worn away through the centuries, furnished a not very pleasant place upon which to stand and work, with 350 feet between one and the plain below. Nevertheless Rawlinson, partly from the ledge, partly from a ladder held by a helper, partly by being suspended in a swing, at various intervals during a space of four years, succeeded at terrible risks in getting a complete copy of the writing. Then it was that he discovered that he had not a uniform inscription in one language, but a very valuable inscription in three languages, in Persian, Median and Babylonian. It was not long until Rawlinson was able to read the Persian, some knowledge of which he already had acquired. Later on scholars were able to read the Median, and then lastly the Babylonian; for this large inscription on the side of the mountain, called the Behistun inscription, furnished

the key to the cuneiform, or wedge-shaped writing of Babylonia and Assyria, even as the Rosetta stone furnished the key to the hieroglyphics. There were those who doubted whether this so-called decipherment of the cuneiform writing was anything more than guesswork, until the British Museum tested the matter thoroughly. Accurate copies of a long historical inscription were given one to each of four scholars, who were asked to work separately over the inscription, and at a certain time to hand in their work. When the separate translations were compared they were found to be practically identical. This demonstrated to the world that the key to the cuneiform had actually been found. As Professor Price says: "This new philological solution was the greatest achievement ever made in the field of language or archeology. *It was as great a discovery in the field of history and philology, as the telegraph in the commercial world.*" For this discovery revealed to the world centuries of the history of mighty nations, which had become but a mere name; nations which played a most important part in the history of the race, and which came for several centuries into vital contact with the children of Israel. This reading of the cuneiform so stimulated interest and so aroused enthusiasm with reference to oriental study that most of the greatest European and American universities

have now well-established departments for the study of Assyrian and Babylonian; while the last half century has also witnessed the excavation of many mounds, the collection of thousands of tablets and cylinders, and the translation and publication of much material. Indeed we already have in published form more than six times as much cuneiform literature as is contained in the Hebrew of the Old Testament; nor has "one-quarter of all the inscriptions discovered" yet been published. "The British Museum alone has more than thirty thousand tablets" that have never yet been translated. This cuneiform literature covers a long period of time beginning fifty centuries before Christ, and extending down to and beyond the end of the Old Testament era. For several centuries the people of Israel came into more or less intimate relation with Assyria and Babylonia; many references occur in the supposedly historical material of the Old Testament to these nations; and a careful study of the cuneiform material should give us an accurate knowledge of customs, persons, and events, by which the historicity and the reliability of these parts of the Old Testament records may be tested.

Having now stated the older and the more recent skeptical positions with reference to the historical material of the Old Testament, and having briefly sketched the history of the

decipherment of the hieroglyphics of Egypt and of the cuneiform writings of Assyria and Babylonia, we are now ready to ask again, "What light does this Egyptian and cuneiform material throw upon the historical character of the Old Testament records?" Let us take a few examples. The historical character of the story of Joseph has been questioned by the destructive critics; and yet, when we compare the record of the Bible as it reveals customs and times in Egypt with the customs and times reflected in the Egyptian documentary material, we find that as George Ebers, the German Egyptologist said: "This narrative contains nothing which does not accurately correspond to a court of Pharaoh in the best times of the kingdom. The history of Joseph, even in its details, is thoroughly consistent with the true relations of ancient Egypt." Or, as another student has said: "The story of Joseph has been confirmed as to its essential accuracy, as to the essential verisimilitude of its pictures of Egyptian life, by every recent discovery." Professor Price says: "The form and dress of the dreams of the butler and baker in the Joseph story are thoroughly Egyptian, locating the events beyond dispute within the border lines of Egypt." And again: "There is an Egyptian tale, 'The Story of Two Brothers,' that is very similar to the Joseph story. It may be an echo of it or based upon it. Its similarity to the

account of Joseph's experience in Potiphar's house is so remarkable that the conclusion forces itself upon one that there must have been some connection between the two stories." And again: "The dream of Pharaoh, with its Nile River, its kine pastured on its banks, its grain, and its sacred seven, are significantly Egyptian. Even some of the words embodied in the Hebrew records are Egyptian." On the monuments there are several references to droughts of many years, caused by the failure of the Nile to rise. In a tomb at El Tab an inscription of the governor Baba states that he, in a time of great famine that came upon the people, dealt out grain, which he had stored up in a time of plenty. Brugsch, one of the greatest of Egyptologists, said: "Baba lived about the time that Joseph exercised his office, under one of the Hyksos kings, in the old town of El Tab. The only just conclusion is that the many years of famine in the time of Baba must precisely correspond with the seven years of famine under Joseph's Pharaoh, one of the shepherd kings." Professor Sayce says: Under the Hyksos kings of Zoan intercourse between Egypt and Canaan would have been easy and constant. No prejudice would have been felt against Hebrew strangers in the land. The Pharaoh and his ministers would have had no hesitation in granting the land of Goshen to a pastoral tribe from Asia. They would have seen

in them friends rather than enemies, and possible allies against the Egyptians." *Thus one after another all of the old skeptical objections to the historicity of the Joseph story have vanished. In its dress, incidents, relations described, etc., it is seen to be in accurate agreement with the customs and times pictured forth upon the monuments.* It would have been surprising if any other relation toward semitic foreigners had been maintained by these shepherd kings than just the relation pictured forth in the Joseph story. When we come somewhat later to the consideration of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, we shall see how cordial and intimate these relations actually were. The light that shines from the monuments increases immensely our confidence in the historicity of the story of Joseph. It matters not so much just when that story was written or by whom it was written. *It is perfectly evident that the writer had the facts of history before him and knew whereof he wrote. His trustworthiness as a witness is confirmed minutely by the monuments.*

Let us take another case. In Exodus 1: 8-14, it says: "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, that knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, Behold the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come, let us deal wisely with them: lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any

war, they also join themselves unto our enemies, and fight against us, and get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh store cities, Pithom and Raamses. But the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and spread abroad. And they were grieved because of the children of Israel. And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor; and they made their lives bitter with hard service, in mortar and brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service, wherein they made them serve with rigor." And later on, in order still more to increase the burden of their slavery, it is recorded in Ex. 5:6-8: "And the same day Pharaoh commanded the taskmasters of the people, and their officers, saying, Ye shall no more give the people straw to make brick, as heretofore: let them go and gather straw for themselves. And the tale of the bricks, which they did make heretofore, ye shall lay upon them: ye shall not diminish aught thereof." The destructive critic has enjoyed picking this story to pieces. "It is preposterous to believe that the noble work of Joseph could have been so soon forgotten and the policy of the rulers so quickly changed with reference to the children of Israel. And that story about those treasure cities, and forcing the people to make bricks with poor

stubble gathered from here and there and everywhere; it all seems so strange and unnatural; you may believe it, if you will, but I can't accept such a story without some other evidence." Again the monumental witnesses come to our aid against the skeptic. All the facts that we have at our disposal point to the conclusion that Joseph lived and flourished in the last dynasty of the Hyksos rule. The nineteenth, or next Egyptian dynasty after the Hyksos or Shepherd kings, was a native or Egyptian dynasty, of whose earlier kings the monuments tell us very little; one of them, however, doubtless being "the king who knew not Joseph." But one of the later kings of the nineteenth dynasty was Rameses the Second, who was a mighty monarch, and the greatest builder Egypt ever knew, filling the whole land with pyramids, temples, sphinxes and monuments. During the reign of the Shepherd kings, who were themselves foreigners from Asia, the pastoral children of Israel were treated with great kindness, their illustrious brother having risen high into a place of great influence and power. It was the policy of the nineteenth dynasty, however, which was a native dynasty, to drive out these foreign rulers, and to kill or oppress by slavery all foreigners within the land. As in China recently an anti-foreign policy arose, and no distinction was made among foreigners, but all were treated alike as foes; so,

when the anti-Hyksos policy took possession of the government of Egypt, and all foreigners were regarded as foes, it does not surprise us to read that "there arose a new king over Egypt that knew not Joseph," nor that he began to enslave and oppress these prosperous children of Israel, settled in the fertile land of Goshen by the very Shepherd kings whom the new dynasty hated; nor are we surprised to read that this Rameses the Second, the Sesostris of the Greeks, to whose building genius all Egypt bears loud witness, should have forced the children of Israel all day long to make brick and to build store cities like Raamses and Pithom. All of these things recorded at this place are now so very luminous in the light that comes from the history that the monuments reveal. Even more wonderful still, in 1883, just a few years ago, Naville, a French archæologist under the auspices of the Exploration Fund, carried on a series of excavations within the old territory of Goshen. Here he discovered the ancient city of Pithom, or Pi Tum. Tum was the god of the setting sun, and Pi Tum means the place of Tum, or the city dedicated to the setting sun. "In Grecian times this city was called Heroöpolis or Ero, the Egyptian word for store-house, suggesting that Pithom and Raamses, which Israel built for Pharaoh, were treasure-cities. At this place Naville discovered even the treasure-chambers themselves. They were

strongly built and separated by brick partitions from eight to ten feet thick. The bricks, half sun-baked, were made, some with and some without straw. These storehouses were means adopted by the Pharaoh, Rameses the Second, to provide for his people in the event of a foreign invasion, or of a famine, such as had often visited this land." Dr. Price goes on to say with reference to this discovery: "These cities of Pithom and Raamses accord with the demands of the Scripture narrative. The storehouses occupy in Pithom almost the whole area of the city, the walls of which are about 650 feet square and twenty-two feet thick. The strawless bricks in these walls almost re-echo the rigor of Pharaoh's words, when he said, 'Ye shall no more give the people straw,' but demanded the former tale of bricks. About these old walls we can see and handle some of the handiwork of the Hebrew slaves. Could those old ruins but speak, what tales of hard taskmasters, of bloody lashings, of exhaustion and distress would they reveal to us!" Thus we see that the monuments again witness to the truthfulness of our Bible records. "The bondage in Egypt" is no longer a myth, but was indeed a terrible reality. *The excavations at Pithom by Naville; the actual occurrence in two instances of the very name "Israel" upon the Egyptian monuments, "Israel" to whom "no seed" had been left; the character of Rameses the*

Second as a builder, and the anti-foreign policy of the time, and the very mummy of Rameses the Second, the Pharaoh of the oppression, in the museum at Gizeh; all of these things bear strong testimony to the reality of the events recorded in the first chapters of Exodus and to the reliability and historicity of these writings.

Let us take another example: The historical character of the records in the two books of Kings and Chronicles, and in the narrative portions of Isaiah and Jeremiah, has been severely questioned by the destructive critic. Until the reading of the cuneiform it was even doubted whether any such persons even existed as are mentioned in these writings; such as Tiglath Pilezar, Sargon, Shalmanesar, Sennacherib, and other so-called kings of Assyria; while it was regarded as certain that no such great invasions and remarkable events as are here recorded could ever really have taken place. Now this whole period of history has been made wonderfully realistic and intensely interesting by the light from the cuneiform writings. We have large historical inscriptions concerning the times of many of these Assyrian kings, telling of their western campaigns, the cities besieged, the prisoners captured, the booty carried away. Moreover, these inscriptions were made by the royal scribes at the royal command at the very time when the events took place and when those who

participated in them were still living. And these inscriptions, buried for over twenty centuries beneath the sand hills of Mesopotamia and preserved until the last hundred years, when their discovery and value would for the first time be really appreciated, are now within our possession and furnish data by which we can test this portion of the Old Testament records. For instance, Shalmanesar II., who reigned from 860-825 B. C., as king of Assyria, mentions in the records of his campaigns "Hazeal of Damascus," whom he shut up in his city, Damascus. Also he says, "I received the tribute of the Tyrians and Sidonians and of Jehu, the son of Omri"; the "son of Omri" designating Jehu as Omri's successor on the throne of Israel. On the famous Black Obelisk of Shalmanesar II., reproductions of which are in many of our large museums, we have a picture of Jehu kneeling before the Assyrian king and paying to him this tribute 2 Kings 15:19 says: "And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver," and in the inscriptions we read that Tiglath Pileser III., who reigned from 745-727, received the tribute of Menahem of Samaria. In the twenty-ninth verse of the same chapter it says: "In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, and took Ijon, etc., etc., all the land of Naphtali and carried them captive to Assyria."

And in the inscriptions of this same Tiglath Pileser III. we read that the territory on the borders of "the land of Omri," as Israel was called, was annexed to Assyria. Again this same king mentions among his subjects "Ahaz of Judah," the biblical record of whose sad submission is told in 2 Kings 16: 17-18. Also Tiglath Pileser introduced a new policy for Assyrian kings, i. e., that of peopling conquered provinces with people of other conquered lands, a custom to which reference is made in 2 Kings 17: 24. In 2 Kings 18: 9-10 we have the record of the siege and capture of Samaria: "And it came to pass in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmanesar king of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it. And at the end of three years they took it: even in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that is the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel, Samaria was taken." And on the monuments we read how Shalmanesar besieged Samaria, but died before the city was taken; and his successor, Sargon II., in December of 722 took Samaria. The biblical record is very accurate. It says, "Shalmanesar besieged Samaria" and "*they*," not he (for he had died) "took it." In Sargon's account of the capture of Samaria we read: "The city of Samaria I besieged; 27,900 inhabitants of it I carried away captive; 50 chariots in it I took for myself, but

the remainder" (of the people) "I allowed to retain their possessions. I appointed my governors over them, and the tribute of the preceding king I imposed upon them." 2 Chron. 33: 11 says: "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon." And in the Assyrian inscriptions Esarhaddon mentions among his subjects, conquered in his western campaign, "Manasseh, king of Judah." In the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of 2 Kings we read of a most remarkable occurrence. One by the name of Sennacherib, a great Assyrian king, in the days of one Hezekiah the king of Judah, invaded Palestine, captured many cities and carried away many people into captivity. It is also recorded there how Hezekiah, in dread of this great Assyrian king, sent a large tribute to him at Lachish and tried to buy him off. A little later, however, the Assyrian king turned his forces against Jerusalem and sent a threatening letter by the hands of one of his chief officers to Hezekiah, king of Jerusalem, reminding him that none of the gods of other cities had been able to deliver them out of the hands of the Assyrian, and saying in the ears of all the people: "Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of the Assyrian's hand. Neither let Hezekiah

make you trust in the Lord, saying, 'The Lord will surely deliver us and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria' (2 Kings 18: 29-30). But there was in Jerusalem a mighty prophet of God, Isaiah the son of Amos, who encouraged Hezekiah to trust in Jehovah, and not to dread the Assyrian or surrender the city; for said Isaiah of the Assyrian king Sennacherib. "*He shall not come into the city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way he came, by the same he shall return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord, For I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake and for David's sake. And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four-score and five thousand: and when men arose early in the morning, behold these were all dead bodies. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.*" After some years he was assassinated by some of his courtiers, "and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead" (vs. 32-37). This now is the Bible record. A few years ago this whole story was scoffed at by the skeptics, and the very existence of a Sennacherib was doubted. Let us suppose that, when the Assyrian material was read, there was no king found by the name of Sennacherib; in that case

the historicity of the Old Testament record would have been impugned; or let us suppose that he was found to be a very early king, living centuries before the days of Hezekiah; then the Old Testament record would not stand; or suppose that he was found to be not a warrior, but a patron of literature and one who never went on great warlike invasions; then the Old Testament record would seem to be in error; or suppose that he was a warrior, but never made any great western or southwestern campaign, then we might well doubt the record. You see how many chances there were against the Old Testament record, if it represented fiction rather than fact, and guess work rather than actual history. But when the cuneiform writings were read, the name Sennacherib was found as the name of a famous Assyrian king; even as the names of the other Assyrian kings mentioned in the Scripture were found in the royal records. Moreover, this man Sennacherib was found to have been a great warrior, was found to have made a great southwestern campaign as recorded in Scripture, and to have left to us a long record of that great campaign. In this record Sennacherib mentions "the land of the Hittites," Sidon, Sarepta, Akko, Ammon, Moab, Edom, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Joppa, Ekron and Gaza, names of towns already familiar to us from the Bible records. Moreover, he boasts, "As for Hezekiah himself, like a bird in

a cage, in Jerusalem, his royal city, I shut him up." Sennacherib was a reality, his great southwestern campaign was a fact, he did make war against Hezekiah king of Judah; but in his record, so full in other respects and with reference to other kings and cities (as Dr. Price points out, and as is apparent to any one who will read it), "*he nowhere claims to have taken the king or the capital.*" *The biblical record with reference to Sennacherib is established in all its essential features by the Assyrian documents.* As Dr. Price says of Sennacherib, "His records of his own campaigns, his conquests, his cruelties, modify in no important respect the character attributed to him by the books of Kings and Isaiah." Do you ask, "Does Sennacherib say anything about any great disaster befalling him in his great campaign, as it is recorded in Kings"? No, of course not. *These kings, and their royal scribes, never recorded anything, except the successes of their arms.* Men do not as a rule, set up monuments to commemorate defeats. Never do Assyrian or Egyptian kings, at least, follow any such custom. Their inscriptions are continuously filled with boasting and bombast, but never a word is written of any disaster befalling them. It is a hopeless task to look upon the monuments for any record of the plagues of the Exodus or the defeat of a Sennacherib. *With reference to this section of the*

Old Testament records, we, then, must say that as regards the names and characters of the kings involved, as regards the great campaigns of that day and the international relations of the time, the historicity and reliability of the Bible records are wonderfully attested by the light from the monuments.

Let us now return to Gen. 14, and to the history of which Melchizedek is a part. This chapter purports to be the record of a great invasion of Palestine by certain allied kings from the North. The invading force sweeps over the whole country with resistless might, and for twelve years the land pays tribute to the conqueror. In the thirteenth year the people of Palestine rebel. In the fourteenth year the invaders come again to terrorize once more the land and to re-exact the tribute. After sweeping over the country, apparently without meeting any organized opposition, the invaders are met in the valley of the Jordan by the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah. A great battle is fought, the invaders being successful; a large amount of booty is carried away, and many prisoners are taken, among the prisoners being Lot, Abraham's nephew. A refugee from the battle flees to the hill-tops and tells Abraham, who seems to have known nothing of the engagement, about the defeat and the capture of his nephew. Thereupon Abraham and several other hill-top friends,

who seem to have formed an offensive and defensive alliance, together with the 318 servants of Abraham's personal bodyguard, pursues hastily the foe as he retreats toward the north and his own country. Near Damascus they overtake the enemy. Abraham, having come some years before from that same country, knows thoroughly their habits and methods of warfare. Coming upon them by night Abraham divides his forces into several bands; and attacking the enemy suddenly and from many quarters, puts them into precipitate flight. All of the booty and the prisoners of war are recovered; and Abraham and his tired and weary men return home in triumph. Upon their return they are given a right royal welcome; for they have saved their country from an insolent foe and a galling tribute. "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the kings that were with him, at the vale of Shaveh (the same is the King's Vale). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all. And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself" (Gen.

14: 17). But Abraham refused to take any reward for his work, giving to God all of the glory. Such is, in brief, the story as told in Gen. 14.

Let us now consider the question of the historicity and reliability of this chapter. *One of the most frequent arguments used against this chapter is that there was no writing of any kind in this remote day,* and that therefore the writer of Genesis, hundreds of years later, could not have had before him any reliable documents from which he could have gathered this history. Therefore this supposed invasion from the north and the supposed great deliverance wrought by Abraham never actually took place; but on the contrary we have here the effort of some pious writer of later centuries to glorify Abraham and make him out a great hero, and also by introducing the incident of Melchizedek to give an account of the early origin of the Jewish custom of giving the tithe. Much light has been thrown upon this chapter and all of these early records by the discovery, even so late as 1887, just fourteen years ago, of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets, which consist of over three hundred cuneiform tablets, containing correspondence between Asiatic and Egyptian kings and other people in the fifteenth century B. C. "Their importance can be perceived when we think that they give us some of the real international life of western

Asia and Egypt before a single word of the Old Testament was written." They speak of social relations, of political conditions, of exchange of gifts, slaves, and proposals of various kinds, such as were made between different nations and subject nations. This discovery of the Tel-el-Amarna letters has thoroughly revolutionized our conceptions of the state of affairs in western Asia and in Egypt, and has proved, as Professor Sayce says, "that the populations of western Asia in the age of Moses were as highly cultured and literary as the populations of western Europe in the age of the Renaissance." It seems manifest that at the time of the Tel-el-Amarna letters, i. e., the fifteenth century B. C., Babylonian language and literature dominated the western world. "These letters," Professor Sayce writes, "are written by persons of the most diversified race and nationality; many of them are from officers of the Egyptian court, and they are sometimes about the most trivial matters. They testify to an active and extensive correspondence, carried on, not by a select caste of scribes, but by every one who pretended to the rank and education of a gentleman. It is clear that the culture of Babylonia must have penetrated deeply into the heart of the ancient orient. There must have been schools and teachers, libraries and archive chambers where books and letters could be stored. Writing and reading must have been

as widely spread as it was in Europe before the days of the penny post." The Tel-el-Amarna tablets make it plain that the writer of the fourteenth chapter of Genesis may well have had before his very eyes documents which were contemporaneous with the events that are there recorded. The age of the Exodus, when Moses is supposed to have compiled Genesis (even the most conservative scholars believe that Moses used pre-existing documents) is proved by this and other discoveries and considerations, "to have been an age of literature and books, of readers and writers." Kirjathsepher, the city of books, and other cities of Palestine, were stored, in all probability, "with contemporaneous records of past events, inscribed upon imperishable clay." "The kinsfolk and neighbors of Israel were already acquainted with alphabetical writing." "Egypt was itself a land of writing," and Moses, who was instructed in all the learning and wisdom of that land was not an illiterate, nor without materials for the writing of reliable history. *The argument against the historicity of Gen. 14 because of the remote date of its supposed events and the late origin of writing, must now be forever laid aside. The evidence of the monuments has destroyed its power.*

Another objection to this chapter was the plea that no such great invasions were characteristic of this early date; that no organized foreign

invasions took place till centuries later; that the late writer of this chapter reflected in it by mistake the conditions of a much later age. The history of the Hyksos domination of Egypt, the contents of the Tel-el-Amarna letters, the facts revealed by the cuneiform that Sargon I. and his son, Naramsin, in 3800 B. C., i. e., *twenty centuries before the events of Gen. 14*, had made a great invasion through the southwest, all of these things give credibility to the record in the chapter that we are studying. *Strong evidence of the historicity of this chapter is seen in the character of its proper names.* Chedorlaomer is seen to be a perfectly true Babylonian name; the first part of which Kudur, is a general Elamite title, just as Pharaoh was in Egypt, for king, as occurs in the name Kudur-magub; Lagamar is the name of a Elamite deity. Ellasar is the same as Larsa; Arioch is the same as Eri-aku; Tidal is the same as Turgal: all of which names occur on the monumental material.

It is even believed by many that we have in the Tel-el-Amarna tablets a number of references to Melchizedek himself. Among the correspondents of the Egyptian Pharaoh is a certain Ebed-Tob, who was a vassal king of Jerusalem. Jerusalem was an important city with a territory extending from Carmel of Judah to Gath and Keilah in the west. This territory was at this time threatened by certain "confederated tribes"

against whom the king Ebed-Tob appeals for help. "It is with this matter that his letters deal. Ebed-Tob held a position which as he tells us was unlike that of any other Egyptian governor in Canaan. He had been appointed, or confirmed, in his post, not by the Pharaoh, but by the oracle and power of the great king, the god whose sanctuary was on Mount Moriah. It was 'not from his father or from his mother' that he had inherited his dignity. He was the king of Jerusalem because he was the priest of its God. He says on several occasions of himself, 'Behold, neither my father nor my mother have exalted me to this place, but the oracle of the Mighty King established (me) in the house of my father.' " In the cuneiform Tel-el-Amarna tablets the name of Jerusalem is written Uru-Salim; uru is equal to alu, which is the determinative word for city. So Ebed-Tob, like Melchizedek of Gen. 14, was both king and priest, a priest-king; also "without father and mother," also of the city of Salim, i. e. of Aru-Salim, which when the "J" before the first letter is added, as the "h" in the place of the Greek breathing, becomes Jerusalem. This works out beautifully, and if it is to be finally accepted by all, will be one more of the many proofs of the historicity of Gen. 14.

By this brief review of some "Light from the Monuments" we have seen how wonderfully the

general truthfulness of the Old Testament records has been established. We may never expect to see all of the Old Testament records thus duplicated by outside material, for only occasionally does that history touch the outside nations; but *what light has come is sufficient to strengthen our faith most mightily; specially when we remember that many facts have been minutely attested; and that no essential fact recorded in the Old Testament records has been in any way contradicted or proved false by any discovery yet made.* In our next study we shall give the whole hour to Melchizedek and to the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ.

The Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ



Chapter VII.

ALL of the seventh chapter of Hebrews, to the study of which we now have come, is given to the unfolding of the Priesthood of Christ as typified by the priesthood of Melchizedek. Our author has come to the place in his argument where it is necessary for him to prove that the Priesthood of Christ is greater than that of Aaron and his successors. He has not found it to be a very difficult thing to show that Christ, who is God's Son, is superior to prophets and angels, who were used of God in the giving of the Old Testament Revelation; nor to prove that Jesus, as Son, is superior to the faithful servant Moses, and His rest superior to that given through Joshua. *But to show that Christ as a Priest is greater than Aaron and his successors, the God-appointed, time-honored priests of Judaism, is a much more difficult thing; the difficulty of which he has felt from the first, and*

to remove which he has been preparing the way by many anticipatory references to Christ's priesthood; a difficulty to which he has recently referred in chap. 5: v. 11, when he said, "Of whom," i. e., of Christ as Melchizedek Priest, "we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing." Not only is it a hard matter for him to show that the Priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron, that it is of the Melchizedek type, that it is the ideal Priesthood; but *it is a difficult problem for him to make it clear to them how Christ can be a priest at all; any kind of a priest.* The only kind of priesthood, known and honored among these Christian Jews, was a priesthood dependent upon Levitical descent. *No one, no matter what other qualification he might possess, could act as a priest unless he was a descendant of Levi, a successor of Aaron; and it was clearly known by all these Christian Jews that Jesus of Nazareth sprung from the seed of David and the tribe of Judah, "as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests." How can Jesus in any case be any kind of a priest?*

To meet this difficulty, as well as to show the superior and ideal character of Christ's Priesthood, is the purpose of this Melchizedek argument. Our author naturally goes over all of his Old Testament material to see if he can find anything there about a priesthood not dependent

upon descent from Levi. Since he is looking for and examining particularly Messianic passages, sayings which, as all Jewish teachers admitted, referred to the coming Christ, he would not be long in turning to that famous Psalm, so often quoted in the New Testament writings, Psalm 110. Here he finds it predicted of that Greater Son of David that he was to be a Priest as well as a King. A son of David a priest? how strange and unnatural it seems! Yet surely there can be no mistake about it; for the Psalm says:

“Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.”

This emphatic prediction in this well-known Messianic Psalm furnishes our writer with just the fulcrum he needs for his argument, to prove both the reality and the ideal character of the Priesthood of Jesus Christ; to prove, I say, not only its reality, but its ideal character. For our author, through a careful study of this wonderful saying and the meager facts recorded in the only other passage of the Jewish Scriptures that even mentions Melchizedek, i. e. the fourteenth chapter of Genesis, inspired and led by the Holy Spirit to see the rich significance of the passage in the Psalm and the remarkably brief history in Genesis, puts history and prophecy together in this seventh chapter of Hebrews, and interprets

both in the light of the worth and work of the Great High Priest of Christianity.

Before we take up this interpretation let us glance for a few moments at the history and the prophecy in their original Old Testament settings. As for the three verses in Gen. 14, in which Melchizedek's brief history is given, we saw from our study of "Light from the Monuments" that *we have every reason to believe that they form a part of a thoroughly genuine historical passage*, "a veritable scrap of ancient history," as the chapter has been aptly called. We have every reason to believe that all of the persons mentioned here, Chedorlaomer, Tidal, Amraphel, Arioch, the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah, Abram, Lot, etc., were real and genuine human beings. This chapter is not poetry, but prose; a plain, historical narrative of actual occurrences. Nor have we any reason to believe that Melchizedek was not just as real and genuine a human being as any other person mentioned in the narrative. *There is absolutely nothing here to indicate anything supernatural about him, or about his work.* When the king of Sodom came out to greet Abraham and his little army and to give him a royal welcome worthy of his victory, "Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High,

possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he" (Abram) "gave him a tenth of all." This is the brief record about Melchizedek. We know not whence he came, nor whither he went. The record tells us his two names, "Melchizedek" and "King of Salem." Nothing is told us about "Salem," where it was or what; but the evidence of the Tel-el-Amarna tablets is that it was the early name of the district of Jerusalem. Nothing, however, either here, or in the prophecy, or in the interpretation, turns upon *the location* of "Salem," though much is made of the meaning of the name. We note about Melchizedek that he is also described as "priest of God Most High." *He was a priest as well as a king*; a royal priest and a priestly king. He was "priest of God Most High"; a true priest of the one True God. Where he received his monotheistic faith we are not told, though he might easily have received it from one of the descendants of Noah. Also it is recorded, "Melchizedek brought forth bread and wine." There is nothing sacramental in this bringing forth "bread and wine," but simply an act of gracious oriental hospitality; "bread and wine" being the ordinary food of that age and very appropriate for Abraham and his tired and weary army. The "bread and wine" are not even mentioned in the review of

the history given in Hebrews, nor is any sacramental significance ascribed to their use here anywhere in Scripture. Melchizedek, as is his privilege as a true priest, adds a priestly blessing to his cordial hospitality, and says, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." And Abram, recognizing in Melchizedek a true priest of the One True God, and also acknowledging the hand of the Almighty in the victory he had won, worships God by giving a tenth of all his spoils to Melchizedek. This is all that is told us about Melchizedek in this historical passage in Genesis 14.

Hundreds of years pass by and nothing, so far as the records in any way indicate, is ever said anywhere about Melchizedek, until we come to the time of the 110th Psalm. To David and his descendants through the prophet Nathan there had come the great promise of divine adoption. Because David had shown an earnest desire to build for God a house in Jerusalem, God had sent this message to him through the prophet. "Moreover Jehovah telleth thee that *Jehovah will make thee a house*. When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy father, I will set up thy seed after thee, who shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will

establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. *I will be his father, and he shall be my son: if he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; but my loving kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee, and thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever"* (2 Sam. 7: 11-16). Upon the basis of this glorious, divine decree concerning David and his successors, there arose a large number of *typical Messianic Psalms*. As psalmists brooded over the glories promised to the Davidic monarchy, and *realized how far short the actual came of the ideal*, they began to dream of the coming of some future son of David who would actually realize in himself the fullness of the promises, and they painted in brilliant pigments the excellencies of his person, and the power and permanence of his kingdom. The second Psalm, beginning, "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing?" is one of these typical Messianic Psalms. The forty-fifth Psalm is another, and the seventy-second Psalm another. All of them pass from some incident in the reign of some actual Davidic king into the realm of the ideal, and describe the glories of the Greater Son of David who was to come, of whom every Davidic king is in some sense a type. Hence these

Psalms are called typical Messianic Psalms. Such a Psalm is also the 110th, in which the only other reference in the Old Testament to Melchizedek, besides that of Gen. 14, is found. In this Psalm this ideal son of David is represented as sitting at the right hand of God, with Zion as his headquarters, and victory assured to him.

"Jehovah said unto my Lord,
Sit thou at my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies
Thy footstool.
Jehovah shall send forth the rod
Of thy strength out of Zion:
Rule thou in the midst of
Thine enemies."

The third verse of the Psalm describes this ideal son of David, this Messianic king, as at the head of a youthful army of priestly volunteers.

"Thy people offer themselves willingly
In the day of thy power, in holy attire;
Out of the womb of the morning,
Thou hast the dew of thy youth."

In the fourth verse this ideal son of David, who thus has thus far been described as sitting at God's right hand with victory assured him, as having Zion for his headquarters, as being at the head of a priestly army of youthful volunteers, is represented as being *a priest as well as a king*, a priest whose priesthood is established on

the oath of Jehovah, and a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

“Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent,
Thou art a priest for ever
After the order of Melchizedek.”

The remainder of the Psalm describes this Messianic king as having God to fight his battles for him, as being victorious on the field of battle and following up his defeated foes with great energy. This wonderful Psalm is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Psalm, and was called by Luther “Der Haupt Psalm,” the chief Psalm. Christ used it powerfully in His argument with the Pharisees, for no Jew questioned its Messianic import. In its emphatic statement concerning the eternal Melchizedek priesthood of this great Son of David the author of Hebrews finds the basis of his high-priestly argument. *How wonderful are these stately steppings of our God* as we trace His footprints upon the sands of time! History in Genesis, prophecy in the Psalms, fulfillment in Christ, interpretation in Hebrews! Surely His thoughts are long, long thoughts! In Genesis 14 we have the record of the meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek; eight hundred years pass by before Melchizedek is again mentioned, so far as the records inform us, and that too in only one verse in this 110th Psalm. One thousand years flit by, and He of whom Melchizedek was a type comes

and does His mighty and merciful work; forty years more pass quickly by, and an unknown writer, writing to Christian Jews who are tempted to give up their new faith and turn back to Judaism, desirous to prove to them the superiority of Christ's Priesthood to the Levitical priesthood of the Old Testament, takes the prophecy in the 110th Psalm and the history in Gen. 14 and interprets both in Heb. 7 in the light of the worth and work of the Great High Priest of Christianity.

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him, to whom also Abraham divided a tenth of all (being first, by interpretation, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is, king of peace; without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God) abideth a priest continually" (Heb. 7: 1-3). The word "For" goes back to the closing statement of chapter 6, that "Jesus entered" within the veil as a forerunner for us, "having become a high priest *for ever after the order of Melchizedek*"; "for" the character of the Melchizedek priesthood is such that it is of eternal endurance. The main proposition of verses 1-3, when all of the qualifying phrases have been eliminated, is "For this Melchizedek abideth a

priest for ever." This much is at once apparent to our author from the prophecy of the 110th Psalm which says: "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order" (or kind or type or character of priesthood) "of Melchizedek." *From the very comparison in the prophecy it is evident that eternity lies in the very nature of the Melchizedek type.* In the first verse and a half we have simply a recapitulation of the historical facts about Melchizedek, exactly as they are given to us in Gen. 14; in the last part of verse 3 we have the doctrine of the eternity of the Melchizedek priesthood stated; while in the parenthesis we have a commentary on the history which is intended primarily to justify the statement that "he abideth a priest continually," and also is intended to suggest other characteristics of his priesthood.

If it were not for the things that are stated in this parenthesis, few persons would find much difficulty in the interpretation of the Melchizedek argument; or at least few people would be so much troubled over the character of Melchizedek himself. And yet it is *not Melchizedek personally* in whom the writer is interested so much as it is *Melchizedek as a type*. The difficulty in understanding the statements of this parenthesis arise mostly from two things: first, many persons fail to note that our author is not acting here the part of an historian, adding new facts to

the record in Gen. 14, but is *acting only as an interpreter of history already recorded*. He says distinctly "by interpretation." He knows no more about the personal history of Melchizedek than what is recorded in Gen. 14. He does not profess to know more. In fact, as already noted, he is not interested in him personally, but only typically. A second cause of stumbling to many in the understanding of this parenthesis is *a failure to appreciate Rabbinical methods of interpretation and oriental forms of thought and expression*. We too often forget that the Bible is an oriental book, and that many of its forms of expression cannot be interpreted with the accuracy and literalness of western language. Keeping in mind, then, that our author is interpreting, and interpreting according to eastern methods and forms of thought, let us look again at this parenthesis.

"Being first, by interpretation, king of righteousness, and then also king of Salem, which is, king of peace." But at once some modern western student says, "I don't see where he gets that! There's nothing said either in Gen. 14, or in Psalm 110, of a 'king of righteousness' or a 'king of peace.' *By what authority* does he interpret and *what* does he so interpret?" He is interpreting the two titles by which Gen. 14 mentions this priest, interpreting them as significant because *names were always significant with these*

oriental people. We have a western proverb, "What's in a name?" which could not be made current in the Orient. Names in the Bible are full of meaning. That is why the large Teachers' Bibles always have among the notes a Dictionary of Names, for without the understanding of these names many passages are unintelligible. Let us take a few examples by way of illustration. When the first child was born Eve called his name Cain, for she said, "I have gotten a man with the help of Jehovah." This to an English reader makes no sense at all, until it is learned that Cain is from the Hebrew *kanah*, which means "to get." Because she had gotten a man she called his name "Gotten" or Cain. When Isaac was promised to Abraham by the angel, Sarah was in the tent door, and *laughed* within herself because she did not believe that she should have a child. When, however, the child was born his name was called Isaac, *laughter*, for Sarah said, "God hath *made me to laugh*; every one that heareth *will laugh* with me." When Jacob and his father-in-law separated, they made a covenant with each other and set up a pile of stones as a memorial, which memorial they called Mizpah, or *watchtower*, as they repeated the beautiful words of covenant, "Jehovah, *watch* between me and thee, when we are absent one from another." Indeed, all the way through the story of Jacob we have numer-

ous instances of the meaning of names. His own name was changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the prince of God, when he prevailed in prayer. The place of his vision of the ladder he called Beth-el, the house of God, because as he said, "Jehovah is in this place; and I knew it not." And another place was called Peni-el, faces of God, because he had seen God, as it were, face to face. All through these Old Testament writings the meaning of names plays a very important part in the narrative. *The prophets often gave to their children symbolical names by which to warn or encourage the people.* When a boy was born in the home of Isaiah, Jehovah said to the prophet, "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz." It was a rather long name for a little boy, but the name was a prophecy. When any one asked Isaiah why he gave the boy such a name, the prophet had a new opportunity to declare the awful truth that had been given to him from God: "The name Mahar-shalal-hash-baz, meaning 'hasten booty, hasten spoil,' is to remind you that God is warning you through the boy's name that soon you will become the booty and spoil of your enemies, for, 'The riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried away before the king of Assyria'" (cf. Is. 8: 1-4). Another child of Isaiah had a name which was both a warning and a promise. He was called "Shear-jashub, which word means "a

remnant shall return." To the wicked it meant, "This nation is to be terribly punished; there will be nothing but a remnant to return from the awful captivity." To the pious it was a word of comfort, "A remnant shall return"; "though the nation shall be terribly punished; take courage, 'a remnant shall return'; not 'one grain' of the true Israel shall be lost." In the first chapters of the prophecy of Hosea, we see also how significantly symbolic names of children played their part in the prophet's teaching. When the Christ was to come an angel from heaven announced His name, for it was important that name and character should correspond; so Joseph was commanded, "Thou shalt call his name JESUS; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua, which means to save. He was called *Jesus*, because He was to *save* His people from their sins. Name stood for character. So we pray "in His name"; and though now with us names are not important, the time will again come when we shall each have "a new name" which will be full of meaning. Our author was not, then, introducing an entirely new thought, nor using a new method of interpretation, when he called attention to the significance of this priest's titles. Interpreting the first name, which is composed of the two Hebrew words, Melchi, which means "king of," and Zedek,

which means "righteousness," he gets his first thought, "king of righteousness." Interpreting the second title, "King of Salem," by translating the last word "Salem" by its equivalent, "peace," he gets his second thought, "King of Peace." Melchizedek is a priest who is also a king, a king of righteousness and a king of peace, or a righteousness king and a peace king. There is significance also in the order of the names; *first*, he is king of righteousness, *and then also* king of peace.

"Without father, without mother, without genealogy." Does he mean to say that Melchizedek never had any "father or mother or ancestors"? Many have thought at first that this is his meaning; but we have forgotten that our author is not writing the personal history of Melchizedek, but interpreting the history as it is already given. He is using Melchizedek as a type, and as a type of a priest. *It is the priestly significance of the facts that he mentions that he has in view.* Some people, interpreting our author's interpretation of history, as if it itself were history, have gotten strange notions about him as a superhuman character. As Dr. Dale says: "There is hardly anything more curious in the history of Scripture interpretation than the variety of theories on the person and dignity of Melchizedek,—theories chiefly built upon the expressions employed in this chapter. In the

early ages of the Church some heretical sects and some orthodox theologians indulged in strange speculations on this subject. By some it was believed that Melchizedek was a manifestation of the Holy Spirit; by others, that he was an early incarnation of Christ Himself; by others, that he was one of the powers or emanations of God, superior to our Lord, but after the model of whom Christ was afterwards formed. Origen of Alexandria believed that he was an angel; others thought that he was a man, formed before the creation of the world out of spiritual not earthly matter; others, that he was Enoch, sent to live on the earth again after the flood. Some conjectured that he was Shem, the son of Noah, following an ancient Jewish tradition, preserved in one of the Targums; others, that he was Ham; others, again, have thought that he was the patriarch Job." We shall be saved from all of these strange notions, if we always keep in mind that *our writer is interpreting not narrating history; that he is interpreting from the point of view of priesthood; and interpreting to an oriental company of readers.* Neither in Greek, Latin, or Hebrew, two thousand years ago, in the Orient, would the phrases, "without father, without mother, without genealogy," have been interpreted with western literalness. Horace, in the preface to his Odes and Satires, speaks of himself as "a man *sprung from no ancestors.*" Did he

mean literally that he never had any ancestors? No, he is apologizing for writing poetry. He is no patrician, but just a slave; according to the ideas of caste which prevailed in his day he is, as it were, "a man sprung from no ancestors." Scipio taunted the mob of the Roman Forum with being people who had "*neither father nor mother*," i. e., they did not have noble blood in their veins, but were simply the common herd, as it were, "without father or mother." "In a Greek tragedy 'Ion' calls himself '*motherless*,' when he supposes that his mother is a slave." The Jews were accustomed to say of every Gentile, "*He has no father*"; because Jews boasted always of their descent from Abraham, and felt that those who were not descended from him had, as it were, no father at all. All life in the Orient in that day was built upon caste or descent. The Jew boasted of descent from Abraham and called everybody else "a dog of a Gentile"; even as the Greek called all who were not Greeks "barbarians," and the Roman called all others who were not Romans "enemies and strangers." *In no department of Jewish life was the matter of descent, or genealogy, so much emphasized as it was in the matter of priesthood. It was an absolutely necessary requirement, if one was to act as a priest under the Levitical system, that he should be able to trace his descent from Levi. No other qualifications*

would make up for this lack. Jewish priesthood was absolutely dependent upon Aaronic descent. This is one reason why in the Books of Chronicles we have preserved those long lists of genealogies, which are so hard for us to read and from which we receive so little spiritual profit. These books were compiled by the priests, and these genealogies, so far as they refer to the Levites, tracing descent back to Aaron, were most carefully kept by the priests, because their priesthood itself depended upon their ability clearly to trace their genealogy from Levi. In Ezra and Nehemiah we have again these genealogies, because those who returned from exile had a similar necessity to know their descent; and in Ezra 2: 61, 62, and in Nehemiah 7: 63, 64, we have an example recorded of where certain, who wished to act as priests, could not establish their Levitical descent and were therefore ousted from the priesthood. "These sought their register among those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they deemed polluted and put from the priesthood." Thus we see that under the Levitical system most careful genealogical registers were kept, and it was impossible that any person should act as a priest who could not trace his descent from Aaron. Our author does not say that Melchizedek never had any father or mother or genealogy; but, *in the silence of*

the early historical record concerning his genealogy, our author does find a deep significance. It was the common custom of religious teachers in that day to interpret the silence of Scripture as being well-nigh as expressive as the statements of Scripture. Silence is often as significant as speech. The writer does not need to apologize in any way for his method, for it was one perfectly familiar to his readers and also thoroughly justified by the facts in the case. Nothing is said anywhere, either in Gen. 14 or anywhere else in Scripture, about the genealogy of Melchizedek, which from the point of view of priesthood, from the point of view of the writer and his readers, is very significant. Evidently Melchizedek's priesthood was not dependent upon genealogy, otherwise his genealogy would have been mentioned. He probably had a father and mother and ancestors, just the same as anybody else. We have absolutely no reason to believe to the contrary. But so far as his priesthood is concerned—and it is only with Melchizedek as a priest that our author has to do—he is "without father, without mother, without genealogy." His priesthood is not dependent upon ancestry, but it is a personal thing, dependent upon his own individual worth.

"Having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God." Here, again, the argument is drawn from the silence of

Scripture, neither the birth nor the death of Melchizedek being anywhere recorded. So far as Melchizedek as a priest is concerned, he is without "beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God." All of the priests of the Levitical system began to fill the office of priesthood at a certain age and sooner or later either expiration of office or death came; but of Melchizedek no record is given of his beginning to be a priest nor of his ceasing his priestly functions. So far as the record tells us, he received his priesthood from no predecessors, and handed it down to no successors. As Westcott says, "He therefore abides a priest 'perpetually,' 'for ever,' *not literally but in the Scriptural portraiture*," "invested with a typical resemblance to Christ." We have in verses 1-3, then, a combination of the history in Gen. 14, and of the prophecy of Psalm 110, which two passages unquestionably constitute Melchizedek, as Dr. Farrar says, "a divinely appointed type of a Priesthood received from no ancestors and transmitted to no descendants. The *personal* importance of Melchizedek was very small, but he is eminently typical, because of the suddenness with which he is introduced into the sacred narrative, and the subsequent silence about him. He was born, and lived, and died, and had a father and mother no less than anybody else, but by not mentioning these facts, the Scripture,

interpreted on mystic principles, 'throws on him a shadow of Eternity; gives him a *typical* Eternity.' The expressions used of him are only *literally* true of Him whose type he was. In himself only the Priest-prince of a little Canaanite community, his venerable figure was seized upon first by the Psalmist, then by the writer of this Epistle, as the type of an Eternal Priest. As far as Scripture is concerned it may be said of him, that 'he lives without dying, fixed for ever as one who lives, by the pen of the sacred historian and thus stamped as a type of the Son, the ever-living Priest.' " As Professor Bruce says: "He had neither predecessors nor successors. We know of one priest of Salem, and but one. He lives in Scripture and in our imagination as the priest of the city of peace." Our author does not say "he was," but "*he is.*" He is known and lives in sacred story by that name. *His priesthood is eternal.*

Having now indicated in general certain features of the Melchizedek type, as royal, righteous, peaceful, personal, and eternal, our author goes on to show in verses 4-28 that *this priesthood is vastly superior to the priesthood of Levi.* This superiority he establishes by *five arguments*, the first of which is based upon Melchizedek's personal worth and dignity. He is greater even than Abraham, and therefore greater than his descendants, even the Levitical

priests. This fact is shown in verses 4-10 "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils. And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham: but he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises. But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes, but there one, of whom is it witnessed that he liveth. And, so to say, through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes: for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him" (vs. 4-10). *Melchizedek's superiority to Abraham is manifest from two things: he received tithes from Abraham and he blessed Abraham.* The fact and significance of Abraham's paying tithes to Melchizedek is made very emphatic in the original Greek of verse 4, by the fact that "Abraham, the patriarch," is placed at the very end of the sentence. "Now consider how great this man was unto whom he gave a tenth out of the chief spoils, even Abraham the patriarch." The hoary head of the Jewish race and the "father of the faithful" voluntarily acknowledged the priesthood

of Melchizedek. Whatever right "the sons of Levi" that receive the priest's office exercised in taking tithes was merely a *legal right*, conferred on them from the outside, "according to the law," a right to take tithes merely from "their brethren," all of whom with themselves were descendants of Abraham (v. 5). But Melchizedek, a man of another race, tithed Abraham, the common father of them all; yea, even Abraham to whom God gave the great "promises" of which our Jewish people boast (v. 6). Levitical priesthood is dependent upon external appointment. Melchizedek's priesthood is based upon his own personal and inherent worth. As Professor Bruce says: "Surely the priesthood of this man, who inspires reverence in the noblest, is of a very high order, superior to that based upon a statute, a mere hereditary trade or profession." Another evidence of Melchizedek's superiority is seen in the fact that he blessed Abraham; for no one questions that it is true that "in all cases it belongs to the better to bless the less" (v. 7). If Melchizedek is greater than the great "father of all Jews," he is surely greater than the Levites, who are the descendants of Abraham. This appears also in this fact that under the Levitical system "men that die," "men who were not only liable to death, mortal, but men who were actually seen to die from generation to generation," "receive tithes,

but there," under the Melchizedek type, "one, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth" (v. 8). The Melchizedek of history "doubtless died, but the Melchizedek of the sacred narrative does nothing but live." But if some one of you should object to the argument and say, "Oh, but Abraham was no priest," We answer that he was the head of the Jewish race, and in all his deeds a representative man. "The descendants of Abraham were included in him, not only as he was their forefather physically, but also because he was the recipient of the divine promises in which the fullness of the race in its manifold developments was included. And Levi includes his descendants in his own person just as he was himself included in Abraham." Therefore we may say that even Levi himself, the head of the Levitical system, paid tithes to Melchizedek in the tithe paying of his great progenitor Abraham (v. 9, 10). Thus our author has set forth his first argument to prove the superiority of the Melchizedek priesthood to the priesthood of the old Testament Levitical priests by showing that *Melchizedek is superior in dignity and worth to Abraham and to his descendants, the Levites.*

In verses 11-25 our writer not only gives four more arguments to prove the superiority of the Melchizedek type to that of Levi, but also by these four arguments he sets forth the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ as the ideal Priest-

hood. *He infers the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood in verses 11-14, "from the mere fact of another priesthood being promised."* "Now if there were perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests" (vs. 11-14). The Levitical system was incapable of accomplishing that at which it aimed, and which must be the real end of all true priesthood, i. e., the "perfecting" of the worshiper. By "perfection" our author means the accomplishing completely and satisfactorily that for which priesthood stands, i. e., the complete removal of sin and the bringing of men really near to God, establishing between them and God a conscious and constant fellowship. This the Levitical priesthood could not and did not accomplish, though it was the foundation of the legal system and the glory of it. The very prophecy by the Psalmist of a New Priesthood is evidence that the old priesthood

was not satisfactory and is sooner or later to pass away (v. 11). "The change was found by experience to be required, and it was described long before it came to pass by one who lived under the Law and enjoyed its privileges." This change, too, must have been a tremendous necessity, for it involved nothing less than the change of the law (v. 12). This necessary change has been recognized and met in the work of Christ. "For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe from which no man hath given attendance at the altar" (v. 13). You ought not to stumble over the fact that Jesus did not come from the tribe of Levi, and think that therefore he cannot be a Priest. This necessary change having been made in the priesthood and in the law, by the oracle which was given centuries ago expressive of the oath of God, because of the unsatisfactoriness of the priesthood, ought to have led us to expect just such a change of tribe as the prophecy intimated and as has actually taken place in the case of the Priesthood of Jesus. "For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests" (v. 14). In other words, *the oracle of God spoken centuries ago through the Psalmist, proclaiming the coming of a New Priest, and the actual facts of Christ's life fulfilling that prophecy, declare plainly the superiority of the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ to the Levit-*

ical Priesthood, which, as is clearly intimated by the coming of a New Priest, is declared to be more or less of a transient priesthood. Let us illustrate the point by an every-day modern example. Suppose that some one should meet you on the street and that in response to the question "where are you going?" you should answer, "I am going to get a new carpet-sweeper"; what would such a statement on your part indicate? It would indicate that the carpet-sweeper that you now were using was not satisfactory, and that when you should get your new one, you would no longer need the old one nor use the old one; having served its time, it would be laid aside for the better one. So hundreds of years ago the Psalmist, inspired by God, uttered a decree of God concerning a New Priest of another kind than that of Levi; that Priest has come, as is evident from the facts of Christ's life. God would certainly not set aside an old priest for a New Priest, unless the New were the better. The Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ must be superior to that of Levi.

"And what we say is yet more evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest; who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life; for it is witnessed of him:

Thou art a priest forever
After the order of Melchizedek.

For there is an annulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect) and a bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw nigh to God" (vs. 15-19). We have called attention to the incapacity and transitory character of the Levitical Priesthood: this truth becomes still more apparent, if, "as it may be most certainly laid down on the authority of Scripture" after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another Priest; who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life." (vs. 15, 16). *The New Priesthood is of a "wholly different type, not legal but spiritual, not transitory but eternal."* In the Levitical type fitness for priesthood is "after the law of a carnal commandment," i. e., it is determined solely by physical considerations, one must be a descendant of Levi. In the Melchizedek type priesthood is a personal affair, dependent upon spiritual fitness, "after the power of a life." The one, being upon a physical basis, is necessarily temporal and transient, doomed by its very nature to decay and death. The other, being based upon life, has power and permanence; for it is based upon "the power of an endless life: for it is witnessed of him:

Thou art a priest *forever*
After the order of Melchizedek."

The emphatic word in the promise is *forever* which is fulfilled in the fact of Christ's endless life. To be sure, He died once for sin and as a sacrifice; but that was purely voluntary and in order that as our eternal Priest He might live forever at the right hand of God. Death has not and never did have any power over Him. He is alive for ever more. It is evident, then, that "this promised priesthood is *not only distinct from the Levitical, but also irreconcilable with it, exclusive of it*; so far, that is, that the Levitical priesthood has no longer any ground for continuance when this has been established." *The oracle of Psalm 110 and the fulfillment in Christ's life have doomed the old priesthood and have established the new.* Two things are clear: "There is an annulling of a foregoing commandment," the law of the Levitical priesthood, "because of its weakness and unprofitableness" ("for the law made nothing perfect"; see v. 11); and there is "a bringing of a better hope, through which we draw nigh to God" (vs. 18, 19). This thought of Christianity bringing "a better hope, through which we draw nigh to God," is the central thought of the writer's whole argument. Christianity is better than Judaism, because it actually opens up for man a new and a living way by which he can actually draw near to God and live in constant and conscious fellowship with Him.

By virtue of the dignity and worth of Melchizedek which are superior to those of Abraham and his descendants, the Levites; by virtue of the fact that the weakness of the Levitical priesthood and the promise of a new priesthood prove its transient character; by virtue of the fact that the New Priesthood is an Eternal Priesthood founded on the power of an indissoluble life; by virtue of these three arguments the superiority of the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ is very apparent. Let us consider a fourth point: "And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith of him:

The Lord sware, and will not
Repent himself,
Thou art a priest forever;

by so much also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant" (vs. 20-22). The superiority of the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ is seen still further in this, that it rests upon an immutable foundation, even the unchangeable oath of God. "God surely does not swear oaths lightly." What He has established by His oath must be enduring. Levitical priests were not inducted into office by the inviolable oath of God. Christ's Priesthood, however, is made secure upon the oath of Jehovah as recorded in the 110th Psalm, which constitutes Him "the surety," the guar-

antee "of a better covenant." Here again in the words "a better covenant" we have one of our author's anticipatory references to a new subject which he will develop later, i. e., in the eighth chapter. It is "a better covenant," because, as he there makes manifest, *it accomplishes what the old covenant did not accomplish*, i. e., it brings people nigh to God in living and loving fellowship. Of this covenant Jesus is the guarantee. *He insures for us permanently close relations with God.*

"And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing; but he, because he abideth forever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (v. 23-25). Note also a fifth point in the superiority of Christ's Melchizedek Priesthood. The priesthood of the Levites was manifestly an inferior priesthood in this, that it was filled by many priests in succession; while a point of ideal excellence in the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ is that it is a Priesthood held perpetually "by one Person, who continueth for ever, and hath a Priesthood that is inviolable, or that doth not pass from Him to another." If a priest was ever necessary, he was always necessary. He might be needed at any time. If now,

instead of a succession of priests, one priest could abide continuously, this surely would be much more ideal. Such a Priest we have in Jesus Christ, who is now seated, alive for ever more, at the right hand of the throne. "Wherefore he is able to save unto the uttermost," completely, perfectly, accomplishing all that is ever necessary to be done for "them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." *If Christ's Priesthood had in any way been faulty, or short of the ideal and perfect Priesthood, God would surely have made provision for some other. But having Him, we need no other. He is able to save completely.* King as well as priest, He mediates royally. A word from Him in our behalf is sufficient. For every person, for every place, for every time, for every necessity, He is able to save completely. He is the ideal Priest. He is living and working now in our behalf to bring us to the fullness of the stature of Christ. He is interceding for us, pleading our cause with the Father. Even as He prayed on earth for His disciples and all who should believe through them, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us." As it was revealed in Exodus 28:29 of the duty of the Levitical priest: "Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breastplate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place"; even so our Great High

Priest, having entered as a Forerunner on our behalf within the veil, bears upon His great heart our names and natures and needs; even within the veil at the right hand of God, where as King of righteousness and King of Peace He royally and effectively makes "intercession for us." *He surely is the ideal Priest; just the One and the only one that we, whether Hebrew Christians in the midst of our many sins and weaknesses or modern Christians with our peculiar trials and dangers, need.*

Our author has now manifested the superiority of the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ to that of the Levites by noting the superior dignity of Melchizedek as compared with Abraham and the sons of Levi, his descendants (vs. 4-10); by noting the transient character of the Levitical priesthood as evinced by its weakness and the divine appointment of another priest (vs. 11-14); by emphasizing the fact that this New Priest is of a superior kind and eternal (vs. 15-19); His Priesthood founded on the oath of God (vs. 20-22); and one of solitary grandeur, indissoluble and unchangeable (vs. 22-25). All these points having been duly emphasized, our author most skillfully concludes the chapter by briefly stating certain elements of the ideal Priesthood of Christ (v. 26), by calling attention to the character of His High Priestly work and sacrifice (v. 27) and by contrasting His appointment and nature to that

of the Levitical priests (v. 28); these last three verses being also transitional to the next chapter and containing several anticipatory thoughts to be developed during the remainder of his high priestly argument. "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for ever more" (vs. 26-28). For us Hebrew Christians in the midst of our many temptations and hardships, such a High Priest, absolute in power and eternal in being, is just the Priest we need. "In Himself *holy*, in relation to men *guileless*, in spite of contact with a sinful world *undefiled*, by the outcome of His life *separated from sinners*, in regard to the visible order, and in regard to the invisible world *made higher than the heavens*" (v. 26). Though the high priest of the Levitical system only offered a sacrifice on the day of Atonement, which, as it were, summed up all the daily sacrifices, yet he needed expiation for daily sins; but the Great High Priest of Christianity had no such daily necessity; since He was "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from

sinners, made higher than the heavens." Being perfected in having "a character temptation-proof and a position inaccessible to temptation," He has no daily need for repeated sacrifice for Himself; nor does He need to offer repeated sacrifices "for the sins of the people," because "once for all" He offered a perfect sacrifice. "*That sacrifice was 'Himself,'* presenting in His death an embodiment of exact and loving obedience to God, and of self-denying devotion to the welfare of man." In such an act the very ideal of sacrifice was realized, and therefore no repetition is ever necessary. This great thought of the completeness of Christ's sacrifice is developed and emphasized in 9: 11—10: 18, forming the climax of his high-priestly argument, and demonstrating the uselessness and superfluity of other priests and sacrifices. At the close of this seventh chapter it would be helpful if we could go back and gather up the various elements of Christ's Ideal Priesthood and put them together; but, after the long study of this difficult passage, opportunity does not here present itself. In our next study we shall gather these characteristics together, and also see His more excellent ministry in the true and better tabernacle and on the basis of the new and better covenant. He is not only the Ideal Priest personally, but also His ministry, in place and conditions, is Ideal.

His Ideal Priesthood: its Scene and Conditions



Chapter VIII.

BEFORE we pass on to consider with our author in the eighth chapter *the scene and conditions of the work* of Christ, let us ponder for a few moments the excellent things that have thus far been spoken of *His Person as a Priest*. In a previous study we found it to be true that *our need of a priest is one of the most universally felt and universally expressed needs of human life*. Incurably religious by our very natures, with a craving and capacity for God inwrought by God Himself into our very beings, and involved as we all are in sin and guilt, we naturally cry out for mediation and representation. We want God; but we are not fit, sinful and guilty as we all are, to come into His Holy Presence; we therefore crave for some one holier than ourselves who shall help us in our sinfulness and speak for us to Him, and if possible, open up some way by which we may get back to God. This thirst for God, this sense of alienation, this

longing for the pardon of sin and restoration to His favor through the work and worth of a priest; these are among the very greatest realities of life, and the deepest instincts of the soul. Prayer and priesthood, sacrifice and intercession, are as universal and as old as the race. As soon as men build homes, they build churches. As soon as the heart speaks, it cries out for God; as soon as men see their own selves, they feel their sin and a sense of separation from God; as soon as they realize their true need, they long for a priest, sacrifice and intercession. These things are established as facts by the history of mankind.

Christianity does not come to mock us in respect to these deepest convictions of our souls, but to intensify them and meet our most real needs. It tells us that this deep craving for God is a true instinct of the real self. As there is color to satisfy the eye, and sound to correspond with the functions of the ear, so there is a God to correspond with this deep religious feeling. This God it teaches us to call "Father." This sense of sin is not a delusion, not a fiction of the imagination, not a lie. Sin is a reality, one of the most awful facts of human life; so terrible in its contaminating, separating, destructive and deadening influence that God has sent His own Son to save us from its power. Those that are living in sin are indeed "dead in sin," even while they live. Those who are living away

from God are "lost," though they may be saved. This crying out for a priest, for sacrifice, for mediation, is a true expression of our deepest need. Christianity comes not to mock us and to make out our deepest feelings, and those of the race, to be false feelings; but to give us in most perfect and ideal form that which we really and rightly crave. "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." These fundamental things, such as the existence of God, man's capacity for God, the reality of sin, the need of priesthood and intercession, the New Testament writers and teachers never stop to prove; they simply take them for granted, regarding them as not needing any proof, and as well-established facts in the consciousness of the race. Let us now see how Christ in His Person is indeed the Ideal Priest for all mankind.

When we begin to study this deep craving of the soul, for what sort of a person do we find that the heart is hungering? *First we yearn for some one who thoroughly understands us, one who knows our needs and sympathizes with us in our trials.* This requirement was partially met by the priests of the Levitical system, who were "taken from among men," and ought therefore to have been able to "bear gently with the ignorant and erring." But how often it was just the reverse! How proud and hard, overbearing and cruel, those priests often were! What an awful

picture of oppression and robbery, mercilessness and faithlessness, the priesthoods of earth have presented! One can say that with scarcely an exception wherever human priests have been able to get supreme power they have never failed to put on the screws. So true is this that "the very word priest," as Dr. F. B. Meyer says, "has an ominous sound to our ears, because it has been associated with immoralities and cruelty. The world has never seen more unscrupulous or rapacious tyrants than its priests, whether of Baal or Molock, of Judaism or the Papacy. All through the ages it has seemed impossible for men to receive power in the spiritual realm without abusing it to the injury of those who sought their help. Study the history of the priesthood, which murdered Christ because He threw too strong a light upon its hypocrisies and villainies, and you have the history of every priestcraft which has darkened the world with crime, and saturated its soil with the blood of the noblest and saintliest of men." *To a world full of people so deeply craving for a priest and so often and so bitterly mocked by the parody of priesthood God sends this message of glad tidings and great joy: "God's own Son is just the Priest you need."* He has been made "in all things like unto his brethren, that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the

people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted." He partook "of flesh and blood" in order that "through sufferings" and the experiences of life and death He might be made "perfect" as "the captain of our salvation." He did not come to save angels, but men and women like ourselves. We "have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one that hath been in all points similarly tempted." "Therefore let us draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in every time of need." He remembers in His exalted state the experiences of his earthly life. He knows how hard amid trial and pain and loss it is to be loyal to duty. He can sympathize with every one of us, He "who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear, though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." Surely no one can sympathize with us more truly or understand us more perfectly than He. No one ever dropped the plummet so deeply into the abyss of human woe with its suffering and trial and pain as He. He stands

peerless in the power of his sympathy. His own heart, burdened, bleeding, broken, is ever touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and understands the pang in every breaking spirit. *Surely so far as sympathy is concerned He alone is the Ideal Priest.*

But we desire in a priest not only human sympathy but *righteousness*. He must be some one better than ourselves; some one who is holier than we and more worthy to appear in the presence of a righteous God; *some one who can more effectively speak for us than we can speak for ourselves*. This idea of holiness has never been realized by any of the ordinary priesthoods of men, for all men are involved in sin; but this idea has been partially met in the thought of official holiness. Priests have been declared holy and righteous; personally and in themselves sinners, they have been considered officially sinless. They have been anointed with oil and set apart for this sacred service; they have worn a peculiar dress, either white or some ecclesiastical garb suggestive of sanctity; they have eaten only certain kinds of food, refraining from what was supposed to be fleshly or animal; they have lived apart from others in special Levitical cities or in monasteries; they have been exempt from war; they have engaged all day and all night in special religious ceremonies; they have observed long periods of fasting, have gone on

pilgrimages, have done some extraordinary penance; every sort of means has been used to accentuate the thought of their holiness and fitness to act as priests of their fellows. Yet how unreal, how hollow, how external it all has been! Even the priests of the Old Testament were compelled to offer first for their own sins before they were fitted to offer sacrifice for their fellows. My confidence is constantly weakened in the intercession of one who by his daily life impresses it upon me that he is a sinner like myself. How often must those who have turned for help to the priesthoods of men have been tempted to lose heart and become weak in faith when compelled continually by the frailties and sins of their own priests to recognize the well-nigh fatal defect in their priestly régime. With what confidence we may trust in our Great High Priest, who is "holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens," who does not have daily need like ordinary priests, first to confess His own iniquity, but could at all times give the bold challenge, "Who convicteth me of sin?" and who, looking with undimmed vision into the face of His Righteous Father, could say, "I do always those things that please Him." "For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for ever more." Surely in the Son of God, who,

though tempted in all things similarly to us, was everywhere and always "without sin," we may rest with supreme faith and undisturbed peace. *In His spotless purity and absolute sinlessness we find another feature of His Ideal Priesthood.*

Still further with reference to a priest we desire not only human sympathy and holiness, but also *the assurance of a divine appointment.* We must be convinced that our representative will be received at the bar of God. Sometimes we send a minister or a consul to represent our government at a foreign court, and he is not a person acceptable to that court. We are at once notified that the person appointed is a "persona non grata"; and if we desire to have our interests at that court well cared for, we shall see to it that some one shall go who is certain to be well received. So if we are to have confidence in the priestly work of another with God on our behalf, we must be assured of his divine endorsement. This requirement of the hungry heart was met in the Levitical priesthood by the fact that God Himself set apart the tribe of Levi as priests. "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron." This was a source of great confidence to the Jew under the Levitical system. Genealogies were carefully preserved, and every means was used to make it clear that the one who ministered at the altar or entered the holy place

would be acceptable with God. As the Jew looked upon his priest, his own heart found comfort in the thought, "He is there, at the altar or in the holy place, as my representative by God's own appointment." And this is one great reason why many of us to-day cannot find comfort in the intercession of the so-called priests that are about us, i. e., *we cannot find any ground, either in Scripture or in reason, for confidence in their divine appointment.* On the contrary we read in this very Epistle that all other priests have been rendered superfluous, and their services unnecessary, by virtue of the fact that Christ has been Himself appointed a High Priest forever. His Priesthood like that of Melchizedek is "without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life." Priest by virtue of His Sonship; "crucified," in the eternal purposes of God "before the foundation of the world"; "named of God, [a High Priest forever"; "without any predecessors and without any successors; His Priesthood dependent not upon temporal or local or physical conditions, but on "the power of an endless life"; He, "because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable." "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." God has appointed Christ as the One Great High Priest

for the human race. *He has appointed no others.* In Christ as Priest we can have absolute confidence; for "Christ glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him,

Thou art my Son
This day have I begotten thee.

said also in another place,

Thou art a priest forever
After the order of Melchizedek."

Moreover this appointment of Christ by God has been made as emphatic as Jehovah Himself could make it, for it has been established "with an oath by him that saith of him,

The Lord sware, and will not
Repent himself,
Thou art a priest for ever."

He has been received at the throne of God; our "Great High Priest hath passed through the heavens"; He has been seated "at the right hand" of the Father; "by the grace of God" He did His High Priestly work upon earth, and "now we behold him crowned with glory and honor." *In His divine appointment to His High-Priestly service we find a third element of His ideal Priesthood.*

But the hungry human heart craves in a priest not only complete sympathy, absolute holiness, certainty of a divine appointment, but also *endless continuity of service*. If a priest is a neces-

sity at all, he may become a necessity at any time. We desire to know that whenever we may call upon him, he is always ready and able to help. There must be no possibility that we shall ever turn to him and be disappointed; no possibility that the disheartening message shall be sent us: "Your priest is dead; he can help you no more." This necessity was carefully provided for in the Levitical system by having many priests and a never-ending succession. The official changed, but the office of priest continued without intermission. It is pointed out here as a matter of weakness, however, that there must be a constant change in the personality of the priest in the Levitical régime; "They indeed have been made priests many in number, because by death they are hindered from continuing." This was true even of Aaron, the head of the priestly order. Few pictures in Scripture are more pathetic than when the command was given to Moses, upon the prediction of the death of Aaron, to provide for his successor. "Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them unto Mount Hor: and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son, and Aaron shall be gathered unto his people and shall die there. And Moses did as Jehovah commanded: and they went up into Mount Hor in the sight of all the congregation. And Moses stripped Aaron of his garments, and put them upon

Eleazar his son: and Aaron died there in the top of the mount; and Moses and Eleazar came down from the mount. And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead, they wept for Aaron thirty days, even all the house of Israel" (Num. 20: 25-29). Their great high priest was dead! *But never shall the time come when the High-Priestly garments of Christ shall be stripped off, and His office given to another.* Men have often tried and are even now trying to divide His garments among themselves; but it still stands forever true that "it is witnessed" of Him "that *he liveth*," a Priest "after the power of an *endless* life," of whom "the Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever." "He, because he abideth for ever, *hath his priesthood unchangeable*;" He is "*perfected for ever more*." We may well have constant confidence in such an ever-living Priest as this, and may draw near with boldness, assured that we shall find grace and mercy in every time of need. *His Eternity of Being is another element of His Ideal Priesthood.*

Perfect in sympathy, absolute in holiness, with a unique divine appointment, and with eternity of existence, there is one other element in the Ideal Priesthood of Christ, so far as His Person is concerned. *He is a Royal Priest, a King as well as a Priest.* Like Melchizedek He is a righteous King and a peace King. Because He

is the King of Righteousness, He is the King of Peace, the peace being the result of His righteousness. In the Old Testament priestly régime priesthood and royalty were always kept separate, Uzziah having been smitten with grievous leprosy when he attempted to combine the two. The Old Testament high priest entered with fear and trembling into the holy of holies, and stood as a weak suppliant in the awful Presence of God; but our Great High Priest has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where *He mediates royally*. "Perfected for ever more," "we seen him crowned with glory and honor." In order to strengthen the claims of human priesthood at the expense of the Priesthood of Christ men have pictured Him as a babe in a barn, or as a helpless victim on a cross; while His human mother even on the night of His birth, as well as at the foot of the cross, is represented as almost a God of a woman. But this is not the Christ in whom we trust. We glory in the cross, but not in the crucifix. The empty cross and the open tomb are our hope. They say, "He was once here, but He is here no longer. He is now alive for ever more." We boast not so much of a Christ cradled helplessly in the arms of His mother, but rather of One who sits royally crowned at the right hand of His Father. "The crowned Christ" is now our cry; crowned because He was crucified. Having per-

fectly done His High-Priestly work upon earth, He has sat down at the right hand of God. *The Royalty of His person is the fifth element of His Ideal Priesthood.*

Having now set forth these features of His Person as an Ideal Priest,—His perfect sympathy, His absolute holiness, His divine appointment, His endless life and His Kingship,—our author in the remainder of his argument declares the *scene and conditions* of His service and the *efficacy and finality* of His sacrifice; chap. 8, vs. 1-5 presenting *the scene* of His service; vs. 6-13 showing *the conditions* of His work; chap. 9: 1—10: 18 concluding the high-priestly argument by manifesting the *efficacy and finality* of Christ's High-priestly offering as contrasted with the insufficiency and endless repetition of Levitical sacrifices. "Now in the things which we are saying the chief point *is this*: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is necessary that this *high priest* also have somewhat to offer. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve *that which* is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as

Moses is warned *of God* when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount" (chap. 8: vs. 1-5). It was because these Hebrew Christians had failed to appreciate in any true sense the *reality* and the *nature* of Christ's High-priestly work, that they were beginning to come again under the fascination of the Levitical system, and were in danger of being led away by Judaism. This fact the author has felt from the first; and in all that he has been "saying," or has yet to say, "the chief point is this: *We*" *Christians* "*have such a high priest.*" But these Hebrew Christians had been accustomed to a *visible* priesthood, had been used to seeing the white-robed priests of the Temple daily ministering at the altar and in the morning and evening sacrifice. They were now stumbling over and were troubled by the *absence* of all *visible* priests in Christianity. Not seeing any priests ministering in the Christian assemblies, they began to long for those spectacular scenes with which they had been for so long a time in Judaism so familiar. For a while they had awaited patiently the Lord's visible Return, but now after these forty years they were beginning to lose their faith. Even as when Moses waited so long in the mountain and the people impatiently "gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods,

that shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what has become of him" (Ex. 32: 1); so it was now. Jesus had been gone from the mortal vision of the Church for many years; His visible Return was, however, expected at any time. Long have these Hebrew Christians waited to see Him; but now their zeal is growing cold, their faith is weakening, they are craving the visible and losing their appetite for the spiritual. They are repeating the impatience of their ancestors, and are saying within their hearts, "Up, give us priests, that shall minister before us; for as for this Jesus, the One in whom we believed as our Saviour from sin, we know not what has become of Him." To help these Hebrew Christians in the midst of such thoughts, and also to show that as Christ in Person is much superior to the Levitical priests, so also *His ministry is more excellent than theirs*, is the purpose of this passage. Levitical priests minister with fear and trembling upon earth, in a man-made, perishable, material tabernacle; but He is One who "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man" (vs. 1 and 2). He "sat down," because His work of sacrifice is done. The sacrificial work of Old Testament high priests was never done, but they

must repeat their offerings every annual day of atonement over and over, ever, ever the same sacrifices which could never, never take away sins. But He, when He had offered one complete and satisfactory sacrifice, "*once for all*, for the sins of the people," "sat down," "ever living" at the right hand "to make intercession for us." Also He "sat down," because He is a King as well as a Priest. "He is worthy" to sit down even in the Presence of God. Old Testament high priests stood tremblingly before the ark in the holy of holies, coming in with confession and under the protecting cloud of rising incense, and backing out with obeisant manner. But He who is the Son, King as well as Priest, has "sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Thus by phrase after phrase does our author emphasize *the royal dignity of our Priest, who carries on His High-priestly work at the very throne of God* "in the heavens," "a minister of the sanctuary," the real Holy Place where God dwells, "and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man." "Christ in the High-priesthood of His glorified humanity represents man to God and in His divine Nature represents God to man." Since Christ as High Priest must do the characteristic service of a high priest, He must have something to offer, and a fit scene for His Priestly work. "For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacri-

fices: wherefore it is necessary that this *high priest* also have somewhat to offer" (v. 3). What this offering of Christ is the author has already mentioned in 7: 27. "For this he did once for all, *when he offered up himself*," a thought which our writer will specially emphasize further on in his argument. Such a service of such a royal Priest must have a fitting scene. You should not be troubled that you do not see Him here upon earth at this time. He is yonder doing priestly service at the very throne of God, in the Holy of Holies. "Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law" (v. 4). Surely there cannot be two divinely appointed orders of priests ministering in the same sphere. Moreover, His service is so superior to that of the Levitical priests. They simply "serve *that which* is a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned *of God* when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount" (v. 5). Our author continually goes back to Judaism as it came from the hands of God, and compares Christianity with the provisions of the Old Testament in the days of their pristine purity and power. The Temple was considered somewhat of a profanation of earlier simplicity, and our writer draws his parallels

continually from the tabernacle and its service as ordained by God through Moses and Aaron. Christ's ministry in the real Presence of God, in "the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched not man," is *infinitely superior to the ministry of Levitical priests on earth in tabernacle or temple.* Levitical priests on earth in tabernacle or temple. Do you not remember how when Moses was commanded to make the tabernacle that he was taken up into the mount and was taught by God how to construct it, the command being, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed in the mount"? *This material tabernacle with all of its various appointments, glorious and beautifully impressive as its arrangements are, is, nevertheless, only a copy, an emblem, a physical, man-made, perishable attempt at reproduction of "a spiritual, divine, eternal sanctuary, shown to Moses in vision on the mount."* You have gloried for so long a time in earthly tabernacle and temple, that you have come almost to worship these things, forgetting that they are but copy and symbol. "What are the essential constituents of a holy place? Not the boards and the veil, not stone and lime; but a God present in His grace, and a priest competent to transact for man with God, and a people drawing nigh to God through His mediation. Given these, your religious establishment is complete in all essential points. And

these essentials are found in connection with the celestial sanctuary more perfectly than they were in connection with the old tabernacle in the wilderness." Such is the force of the argument in chap. 8: vs. 1-5. "A celestial sanctuary, High Priest and Sacrifice: such are the transcendent realities whereof the material tabernacle, and the Levitical priests and sacrifices, were *the rude, shadowy copies*." How well-nigh revolutionary such thoughts must have been to these materialistically inclined Jews, ever clinging to the symbol instead of to the truth symbolized, ever fascinated by the visible and temporal and missing the invisible and eternal! How powerfully suggestive such pictures must have been to those who had the inner vision! Let us also beware lest interpreting too literally these pictorial descriptions we too miss the high spiritual realities that these chapters so concretely and vividly present.

Before we pass on to consider the new and better covenant of which He has become the mediator, let us pause for a moment to reflect upon God's command to Moses: "See to it that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount." Sometimes some people scorn the dreamer and the man of vision. In this boasted "practical" age the philosopher and the idealist are not always held in highest repute. Yet we cannot progress without ideals,

and "where there is no vision the people perish." *We must have ideals, patterns, models.* We should not think of attempting to build any kind of a house without a plan. The more important and enduring the structure, the more careful we should be about our architectural designs. Moses was commanded, when about to make the tabernacle, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount." We are building, building for eternity, building a house in which we must always live, building a tabernacle for the Holy Spirit's indwelling. Let us be sure, then, that we work according to some purpose. No fine building ever "happened." No great life was "by chance." Let us see to it that we have a pattern, and *let us get that pattern "in the mount."* Too many, like Lot of old, love to do as they do in the cities of the plain. "Let us lift up our eyes unto the hills whence comes our help." Instead of "comparing ourselves among ourselves," and being satisfied with low ideals and small achievements, let us see to it that "we make all things according to the pattern showed us in the mount." Whatever it may cost us, we can well afford it. *Let us hew to the line of "the pattern in the mount."* Jesus Christ and the law of righteousness are the pattern. The Holy Spirit in us will empower us to realize more and more of the ideal. Every morning by Scripture reading and

prayer we shall need a new vision "from the mount." Many a time throughout the day we shall need to "lift our eyes to the hills"; but whatever our occupation, and wherever our sojourn, let us see to it that we "make *all* things according to the pattern showed us in the mount."

Christ is not only superior to the Levitical priests and to all priests in His Person and in that He ministers in a better tabernacle, the real Presence of God; but also "Now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith,

Behold the days come, saith the Lord,
That I will make a new covenant with
The house of Israel and with the house of Judah;
Not according to the covenant
That I made with their fathers
In the day that I took them by
The hand to lead them forth
Out of the land of Egypt;
For they continued not in my covenant,
And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
For this is the covenant that
I will make with the house of Israel
After those days, saith the Lord;
I will put my laws into their mind,
And on their heart also will I write them:
And I will be to them a God,

And they shall be to me a people:
 And they shall not teach every man his fellow citizen
 And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:
 For all shall know me,
 From the least to the greatest of them.
 For I will be merciful to their iniquities,
 And their sins will I remember no more.

In that he saith, a new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (vs. 6-13). The line of argument here is similar to that of vs. 11-14 in chap. 7. There the promise of Psalm 110 of a New Priest is shown to be proof positive that the old priest was not satisfactory, and that when the New and, of course, Better Priest should come the old would be laid aside. To recall our former illustration: The new carpet sweeper meant that the old, having served its time and being now unsatisfactory, would be laid aside in favor of the better sweeper. So here our author uses the great prediction in Jeremiah 31:31-34 of a new covenant as proof positive that the old was unsatisfactory and having served its time was even now "becoming old," and because it "waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away." This subject of the new covenant was mentioned by anticipation in 7:22, where it says: "Jesus hath become *the surety of a better covenant*," i. e., the agent by whom its stability is guaranteed. Here in v. 6 He is called "*the mediator of a better covenant*," i. e., the

agent by whom it is established. These thoughts so familiar to us about the New Priest, the Real Presence, the New Covenant, the Supreme Sacrifice, must have seemed novel and strange, almost overwhelmingly revolutionary, to these Christian Jews when they were presented to them for the first time. We shall find it hard indeed to put ourselves in thought at just their point of view. Read, O Christian Jew, your Old Testament Scriptures, and you will see in Jeremiah's prophecy the doom of the old covenant and the promise of the new. For there it is plain how Jeremiah found fault with the provisions of the old and declared that the new would be strong and effective in just those points where the old failed. In the old covenant God gave to the children of Israel through Moses as a mediator the Ten Commandments, written on two tables of stone, and promised that He would bless them on condition that they would keep the law. "And Moses came and told the people all the words of Jehovah, and all the judgments; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which Jehovah hath spoken will we do" (Ex. 24:3). But the people did not live up to their promise. They did not keep the law. External prohibition was insufficient to change the life, to restrain from sin, or to renew the heart. In the new covenant the law will not be written on tables of stone and deposited in an

ark; but written by the Spirit of the living God upon the fleshly tablets of the heart. The relationship will be vital and permanent. "I will be their God and they shall be my people." The new covenant *will be internal, instead of external* (v. 10). Those who participate in the new covenant will of necessity be born again, born from above; God will take away, as Ezekiel said, "the heart of stone" and give "a heart of flesh." In the old covenant God gave a large number of detailed instructions with reference to religious duties, and provided a priestly class to instruct the people in the minute points of ceremonial service. But in the new covenant there will be through the Spirit a first-hand knowledge of God. Life will be lived under the dominance of a few great yet simple principles. God will pour out His spirit upon all believers, laymen as well as priests, and Joel's prophecy will be fulfilled. Indeed, under the new covenant there will be no distinctively priestly class; for all believers shall have full and free access to God through our Great High Priest. "Whosoever will may come," will be the invitation of the new covenant; "Come *unto me*, and whoever cometh unto me I will in no case cast out." Prelacy will have no place in the new covenant; because on the one hand of the ideal High Priest Jesus Christ, who is a "Priest forever" with no successors or rivals; and on the other hand because of

the universal priesthood of all believers, "For all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them" (v. 11). *The knowledge of God and the privileges of access, the special prerogatives under the old covenant of a priestly class, will now be the common possession of all believers.* Finally, under the old covenant God promised to the people "temporary forgiveness of sins of ignorance and infirmity, on condition of their offering certain specified sacrifices, at certain specified times, and in accordance with certain prescribed forms, i. e., for example the sins of ignorance of a year were canceled on the annual day of atonement by the offerings of the high priest." But under the new covenant there would be not an annual or temporal but a complete and eternal forgiveness, not of ceremonial sins, but of all sins, no matter how black and great. "For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more" (v. 12). *The new covenant will provide full and final forgiveness for all sins.* This new covenant would thus abrogate the Old Testament law and put in its place the law of love, the law of Christ, two great commands, written in the regenerate heart, supreme love to God and unselfish and brotherly love to one's neighbor. This new covenant would abrogate the Old Testament priesthood by putting in its place the work of instruction by the Holy Spirit, and by rendering sacrifice no

longer necessary on account of the full and free pardon of all sins through the work of our Great High Priest, whose sacrifice is complete and whose ministration is forever. "Given only the true Priest and the true Sacrifice, then ritual worship becomes useless, and a simple worship of the living God takes its place, and obedience is made easy by law being transmuted into love." This prediction by Jeremiah hundreds of years ago of a new covenant certainly rings the death-knell of the old covenant. God's decree long ago foretold has now been put into execution, and Jesus has become the "surety," or guarantee, and the "mediator," or agent, of this new covenant. With the law internal instead of external, and the knowledge of God and access to God open to all members of the covenant through the full and final forgiveness of all sin, *no place is longer found for the old régime*. "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old, and waxeth aged is nigh to vanishing away" (v. 13). As Professor Bruce so graphically writes: "The time of fulfillment has arrived. Leviticalism is decrepit and death must ensue. Think of this, ye Hebrews, who cling to Levitical ordinances! See: the high priest's head is white with age; his limbs totter from feebleness; the boards of the tabernacle are rotten; the veil of the sanctuary is moth-eaten. Everything

portends approaching dissolution. Let it die then, the hoary system, and receive from devout men decent burial. Shut not your eyes to the white hairs and tottering steps, fanatically striving to endow the venerable with immortality, embalming that which is already dead. Accept the inevitable, however painful, and find comfort in the thought that though the body dies the spirit lives on, that when the old passes away something new and better takes its place. It is sad to lose such a one as Simeon the just and devout; but why mourn for him when a Christ is born?" "That which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away." And within three or four years of the very time when these words were written Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans, the temple was burned, and Judaism as a sacrificial, Levitical system ceased forever.

The Day of Atonement; Christ's More Excellent Ministry



Chapter IX, verses 1-14.

HAVING set forth in chapter 7 the superiority of Christ's Person to that of the Levitical priests, and in chapter 8 the scene and conditions of His more excellent ministry, our author in chap. 9—10, v. 18, shows the superior character and complete efficacy of His High-priestly offering by contrasting it with the sacrifices of Judaism. In chap. 9, vs. 1-14, which passage is the basis of our study for to-day, *we have a contrast between the tabernacle and its priestly services and the sanctuary and superior offering of Christ*; verses 1-5 describing the tabernacle and its furniture, verses 6-10 its priestly ministrations and the unsatisfactory character of its ritual, verses 11-14 the true sanctuary into which Christ has entered and the efficiency of His sacrifice. In the last verses of chapter 8 the writer of Hebrews has stated most emphatically that the old covenant and its pro-

visions have had their day, and are about to pass off the stage of action: "That which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away." The Levitical system and all its glory will soon be a thing of the past. Its doom, predicted long ago by the prophets and now brought near by the establishment of the new covenant, is inevitable. Before we bid it, however, a last good-bye, let us lovingly linger for a few moments over its provisions; though we shall see in these very provisions the evidence of its temporary character and the foreshadowing of something better to come. "Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a *sanctuary* of this world. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein *were* the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the Holy place. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally" (vs. 1-5). The structure of the tabernacle and its enclosure is doubtless familiar to us all; yet it may be found helpful just here to *review its general arrangements*. First there

was a rectangular yard, 150 feet long and 75 feet broad, formed by a fence of heavy canvas fastened to poles set in sockets; the fence being about seven feet high, and without openings anywhere except at the east end, where there was one large entrance. This fence was to mark out the outer court, to protect the tabernacle from intruders and to add to the thought of its sanctity. In this outer court between the entrance to the yard and the entrance to the tabernacle was the great altar of burnt-offering, upon which were offered the morning and evening sacrifices; and near by the altar of burnt offering was the laver, always full of clean water for the use of the priests. This great altar of burnt-offering, and its accompanying laver, was the only article of furniture in the outer court. Seventy-five feet back from the entrance into the outer court we come to the tabernacle proper. It was a rectangular structure 45 feet long, 15 feet broad, and 15 feet high; made out of planks of acacia wood, 27 inches wide and 15 feet long, which were stood on end, fastened in sockets at the bottom and held together by three long golden rods as the staves of a barrel are bound together by hoops. These boards, covered with the choicest gold, formed the two sides and back end of the tabernacle; while the eastern end, which was the entrance to and the door of the tabernacle, was composed of five golden pillars

over which fell the folds of a rich, heavy curtain. Thirty feet back from the entrance to the tabernacle, i. e., back from the first veil, there was another veil, of fine-twined linen, and curious imagery of most exquisite workmanship, which divided the tabernacle into two rooms, or courts, i. e., the Holy place in front and the Holy of holies in the rear. The ceiling was formed by four layers of curtains which were thrown over the top of the tabernacle and which hung down at the sides of the acacia boards, there being "first a gorgeous curtain wrought with brilliant hues, and covered with the forms of cherubim; next a veil of pure white linen; third, a strong curtain of ram's skins, dyed red; and lastly, to defend it from the weather, a common and coarse covering of badgers' skins." Since the tabernacle was designed to meet the religious needs of a nation on the march, i. e., of the children of Israel during the wilderness wanderings, its mechanism was so arranged as that the structure could easily be taken down and easily put together again.

Although our writer mentions many of the most important institutions of Judaism throughout this Epistle, we must bear in mind that he is not primarily discussing the Jewish ritual, but only referring to these things in order to bring out their bearing upon the great subject of sacrifice, and specially as a background upon

which he can the more powerfully portray the superior High-priestly work of Christ. Before carefully enumerating the furniture of the tabernacle our author characterizes it as a man-made, visible, tangible thing, belonging to the earth and therefore perishable (v. 1). However costly and fine, it was a material affair, liable to wax old and vanish away. You could hardly have expected anything else. "Even the first covenant had ordinances and its sanctuary," but it was a sanctuary "of this world." As has already been indicated in our review of the structure of the tabernacle, there were two rooms, or tabernacles as they are here called. "For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein were the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the Holy place" (v. 3). The first thing in the first room which would attract one's attention upon entering was the seven-branched "candlestick," which was lit in the evening and trimmed in the morning; burning all the night through and seeming to say to Israel that, though the priestly service of the day was over, *Israel's God never slumbered nor slept, darkness and light being both alike to Him*; at all times He is ready to listen to and to help His people. Later on it was the custom to keep this light burning both night and day, though the earlier custom seems the more suggestive. Our pictures of the seven-branched

candlestick are taken from the bas-relief upon the triumphal arch of Titus in Rome. Another object in the first room, "which is called the Holy place," that would at once attract attention was "the table," of acacia wood and overlaid with gold, upon which every Sabbath day twelve unleavened loaves of showbread were placed, in "two piles, six in a pile," one loaf for each of the twelve tribes of Israel, the loaves being sprinkled over with frankincense. When these loaves were replaced each Sabbath morning by fresh ones, the old ones were eaten by the priests *in the tabernacle*. It was unlawful to eat them elsewhere. (See Lev. 24: 5-9). This bread was called "show-bread," because it was set out before the face or presence of God. As God was the light of His people, so *He was by the "show-bread" acknowledged as the Giver of all the common blessings of life*. "Thou openest thy hands and satisfiest the want of every living thing."

"And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; having a golden altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein *was* a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally" (vs. 3-5). In our author's

description of the second room, or "the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies," there are *two points of difficulty*. At the first glance it seems as if he had made a mistake and put the "altar of incense," which, as we all recall, stood on this side of the second veil and in the first room, within the Holy of holies. This difficulty led the translators of both of the King James' version and of the English Revised Version to translate the Greek word "censer of incense" instead of "altar of incense." The Greek word is "a neuter adjective importing anything having regard to or employed in the burning of incense" (Alford), and "may therefore mean either an altar upon which, or a censer in which, incense was burned." If the word is to be translated "censer of incense," then the reference must be to a special golden censer which tradition says the high priest used on the day of atonement, or to some censer stand upon which the high priest placed his golden brazier in which he carried the incense into the Holy of Holies, thus leaving his hand free for the sprinkling of the blood. *But there are strong reasons for rejecting the reading both of the King James' Version and the English revision in favor of "altar of incense" as in the American Revised Version.* In the first place, if this word does not mean "altar of incense," then the writer in what appears to be a most careful inventory of the furniture of the

tabernacle does not mention the important and necessary "altar of incense" at all. This seems incredible. In the second place, we have no mention in Scripture, unless here, of such a special "golden censer" used on the day of atonement; and even if it were so used, it could not by the very nature of the case have been kept in the Holy of holies, for in that case the high priest would have been compelled to go in there to get it; this would have been a very improbable thing for him to do, considering, as Professor Bruce says, "that the very purpose of its use was to make it safe for the officiating priest to go within the veil," under the protecting cloud of rising incense. In the third place, a more careful study of our writer's language and of the position and purpose of the altar of incense in the arrangement of the tabernacle will relieve the difficulty of the problem very much. Our author, who has already shown himself to be a master of accurate language and well acquainted with Judaism, has made no mistake here; but, while he speaks of the first tabernacle "*wherein*" were the candlestick and the table, he carefully changes the form of expression with reference to the second room: "*having*" a golden altar of incense. The altar of incense did not stand *within* the Holy of holies, but it *belonged* to it. And this is rigidly accurate, for in 1 Kings 6: 22 we read, "Also the whole altar *that belonged to*

the oracle he overlaid with gold," the reference being unquestionably to the altar of incense. In the original directions concerning the placing of the altar of incense its position is very accurately fixed: "Thou shalt put it before the veil that is by the ark of the testimony, before the mercy-seat that is over the testimony where I will meet with thee" (Ex. 30:6). This position "by the ark" and "before the mercy-seat" was an indication of its peculiar sanctity; when the curtain was drawn on the great day of atonement, it was "the only thing not contained in the innermost sanctuary which was sprinkled with the atoning blood." As the great altar of burnt offering was a sort of a doorway and means of entrance into the Holy place, so the altar of incense was the doorway into the Holy of holies. *Though it stood just this side of the veil, it belonged to the Holy of holies.* This altar of incense was made of acacia wood, overlaid with gold and was not used for ordinary sacrifices, but "as a stand for the vessel in which the sacred frankincense was burnt." Live coals were brought morning and evening from the great altar of burnt offering outside and placed in this vessel for the offering of incense, incense being the symbol of praise and petition.

Another but far less important difficulty in the author's picture of the Holy of holies is his description of the contents of "the ark of the covenant," "wherein was a golden pot holding

the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant" (v. 4). Nowhere in the Old Testament is it said that the pot of manna and the rod were placed *within* the ark; but the command given to Moses and Aaron was: "Take a pot and put an omerful of manna therein, and lay it up *before* Jehovah to be kept for your generations." "So Aaron laid it up *before* the Testimony" (Ex. 16: 33-34). Moreover, in 1 Kings 8: 9 it is recorded that when Solomon brought the ark into the temple: "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when Jehovah made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt." *The Jewish tradition, however, was that the pot of manna and the rod were actually placed inside of the ark, but they had been removed from it before the days of Solomon*; the pot of manna being a souvenir of God's gracious feeding of the people in the days of the wilderness wanderings, and the rod that budded being the symbol of priestly authority given to the Levites during the rebellion of Korah against their privileges. Our author has a disposition all the way along in his argument to allow everything even that tradition claimed about Judaism, granting all that its most ardent supporters might advance so long as he can honestly do so, and then upon this as a background to put forth a superior claim for Christ

and Christianity. If it seems to increase the value of pot of manna or rod to think of them as in the ark, let it be so. *Christ is greater than any and all of these things. The tabernacle, golden though it was*—and he has been specially careful to mention that the altar was of gold, and the ark of gold, and the pot of gold—*was a sanctuary of this world, temporary and perishable.*

“*The ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein were the tables of the covenant, and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat,*” *was the most sacred article of furniture in the tabernacle;* standing in solitary grandeur within the Holy of holies, where no one ever came, except on the one great annual day of atonement when the heavy veil between the two courts was drawn and the high priest alone entered to atone for sin. This ark, an oblong box 4 feet 6 inches in length by 2 feet 8 inches in breadth and height, was made of that most durable of woods, acacia wood, and overlaid with gold. Upon its top was a lid of heavy gold plate called “the mercy seat,” on which “cherubim” knelt with faces toward each other and toward the lid of the ark. Exactly what these cherubim were no one knows, but many have thought them to have been “symbolic forms in which were combined the highest kinds of created life known to us, the ox, the eagle, the lion and the human form united.” Scripture is

impressively and reverently silent about the nature of these figures that hovered over the mercy seat and about the exact character of the Shekinah glory. The two tables of stone within the ark were a constant witness of the holiness of God's character, and of the covenant into which the Israelites had entered at Sinai. The ark, above whose golden lid at the mercy seat between the cherubim, God manifested Himself in the mysterious Shekinah, or shining of His brightness, was the continual symbol of God's presence in their midst. This ark, when the people were on the march, was carried upon staves by the Levites at the head of the procession; and, when Israel encamped, it rested within the Holy of holies.

Our author has not opportunity here to speak in detail about these various articles of tabernacle furniture, but presses on to the priestly ministrations (v. 5). "Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; but into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing; which is a figure for the time present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that

cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshiper perfect, *being* only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation" (vs. 6-10). When the tabernacle and its furniture had thus been made, according to the idea given to Moses in the mount and according to the description given in verses 1-5, it was the custom for the ordinary priests to go morning and evening into the first room, the Holy place, accomplishing the priestly services, i. e., trimming or lighting the lamps, burning the morning and evening incense, changing once a week the show-bread, etc. All true Israelites were permitted occasionally to come into the outer court, none but the priests being permitted to enter the Holy place. "But into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself and for the errors of the people" (v. 7). No one ever entered the Holy of holies except "the high priest"; he went in "alone," i. e., there were none accompanying him and there were no priests loitering about in the tabernacle or peeking into the back room, he alone being in the tabernacle at the time of entrance. He went in "once in the year," i. e., on one occasion, on the great day of atonement; he went into the Holy place several times on that day, but these various entrances were considered parts of one service; hence he says "once in the year."

"Not without blood which he offereth for himself and for the errors of the people;" that is, there was only one occasion of entrance, and the entrance was allowed to one representative of the people only, and only then because of the blood of another offered for his own sins and for those of the people. As Dr. Westcott says: "It must be kept in mind throughout that the Holy place was the scene of man's worship, and the way by which he approached God; while the Holy of holies symbolized the Divine Presence itself." *This method of graded approach to God*—all strangers or the ceremonially unclean being shut out entirely from the outer court, true Israelites on certain conditions being permitted to enter only the first court, priests, and priests solely, being permitted only to enter the Holy place, and none but the high priest being ever permitted to enter the Holy of holies, and that too only once in the year under protecting cloud of incense, and by offering blood of atonement for his own sins and for those of the people—was the vivid way by which "the Holy Spirit" was "signifying" in that day "that the way into the Holy place," i. e., direct access to God, "hath not yet been made manifest,—while as the first tabernacle is yet standing" (v. 8). Just so long as the first or outer tabernacle held a recognized place among divine institutions the limits placed upon the worshiper were manifest, *as he was*

always separated from God, whose home was considered to be in the Holy of holies. In the temple there was the same general arrangement of courts as in the tabernacle. There was the outer court of the Gentiles, into which any one could come; then the court of the Jews for Jews only; then the court for Jewish men only; then the court for the priests; and lastly the innermost shrine where God dwelt. By this graded method of approach unto God, *two great ideas were kept constantly before the mind of the Jew*, i. e., on the one hand, the character of God and man's need of approach to and fellowship with Him; and on the other hand, man's own sins and the necessity of its removal before free access to God could be enjoyed. As the Jew stood in the outer court looking toward the tabernacle, where God dwelt and in the first room of which the priests, his own brethren, were daily ministering, the existence of God, the holy character of God, the desire to commune with God, the sense of his own sinfulness and the need of mediation and sacrifice, were *tremendously and constantly intensified*. From out of the tabernacle the message must continually have come to him: "The holy God is here, and you, a sinful man, are there in the outer court; and you are there because you are a sinner and need forgiveness. God is dwelling in your midst, because He knows that you need His Presence and because He yearns

to bless you. He has ordained this priestly ministration because He would have you turn from your sins, and through your representatives draw nigh unto Him. The entrance of your holiest representative into His Presence once a year is a basis for hope that some time and somehow access to Him will be open to all."

The first, or outer tabernacle, being the place where most of the priestly service and worship took place, is in verse 9 described as "a figure for the time present," a parable, teaching by its position "the temporary, shadowy and imperfect nature" of this earlier dispensation; urging the Jews of that day to look forward to something better and more satisfactory to come. The "gifts and sacrifices offered" there, consisting of meats and drinks and divers washings, are of such a nature, as carnal ordinances, i. e., of a material, physical, fleshly kind, that *they cannot have more than an external and fleshly effect*. Such offerings "cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshiper perfect," i. e., cannot do more than remove ceremonial defilement, cannot bring any one into conscious and constant communion with God and give to the religious consciousness the sense of union with Him. Such offerings were only "imposed until a time of reformation," until the time of the new and better covenant, predicted by Jeremiah and other prophets, and established by Jesus Christ, a time

when God would remedy the serious defects inherent in the very nature of the old covenant and its ordinances of service (v. 10).

Before we study verses 11-14, in which the writer presents the superior offering of Christ, *let us try to get a clear idea of the work of the Old Testament high priest on the great annual day of atonement.* Our author has the services of this grand and glorious day continually before his mind throughout the rest of the high-priestly discussion, the thought being that if Christ's work excels that of the high priest on this day, then surely there ought to be nothing else in Judaism to lure away these Hebrew Christians. If His sacrifice is more efficacious than that of the most impressive day in the Jewish ritual, why turn from Him to it? The best description of the day of atonement in Scripture is found in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus. This gorgeous ceremonial took place always on the tenth day of the seventh month, the number 10 signifying completeness, and the seventh month ending the festal half of the Jewish year, i. e., according to our months during the last of September or the first of October. *This day was the greatest day in the Jewish calendar,* being commonly called by the Jews "*the day*" par excellence. It was the only *fast* day in the year, and was often called "*The Sabbath of Sabbatism,*" or the "*perfect Sabbath.*" All work of every kind was pro-

hibited under heavy penalty, and the people were to "afflict their souls," i. e., they were to spend the time in fasting and thinking of their sins. Toward this great day the people had been looking for months, for on this day they expected to receive perfect pardon for all sins of the past year, the very Hebrew name which is translated day of atonement meaning "the time of covering." On this day the high priest was the one who officiated at the tabernacle services. Ordinarily the high priest of the Jewish system was a good deal of a figurehead, a sort of a drum-major with his magnificent garments and precious jewels; but *on this great day he had complete charge of the ceremonies.* On the seven days preceding the day of atonement he scrupulously separated himself from the people, and spent much time in religious exercises. All the night before the great day he spent in reading the books of Moses through and being specially careful not to become in any way ceremonially defiled and so unfitted for his responsible duties. The important day having come, *there were five victims of sacrifice necessary.* We shall study the day in its pristine simplicity, these services having been much elaborated in later times and the number of sacrifices largely increased. Let it be kept in mind also that these special services were in addition to the usual morning and evening sacrifices. The five victims were these: a

bullock for a sin offering for the priest, and two he-goats for the sins of the people, one to be slain as a sacrifice and the other to be used as a scapegoat; two rams for burnt offerings of self-dedication and gratitude, one for the priests and one for the people. All things having been made ready, and the people with the ordinary priests having gathered in front of the tabernacle, the ritual of the solemn service now begins. First the high priest passes into the Holy place and takes a complete bath to remove so far as possible all impurities. Then he dresses himself; not in the gorgeous garments of his office, for he is in humiliation for sin, is representing the people, and is soon to come as a sinner and for sinners into the Presence of the Holy God, where it ill becomes him to appear in gaudy or brilliant garments: but he clothes himself in the white linen of the ordinary priests with the simple addition of a white girdle, all his ornaments and the marks of his high-priestly office having been laid aside. The high priest having fully bathed and having now clothed himself in pure white, the bullock for a sin offering for himself and the other priests is slain. Then he takes a censer full of live coals (that have been brought from the great altar of burnt offering in the outer court) and the specially prepared incense (which it was a crime to counterfeit), and having drawn back the curtain between the Holy place and the

Holy of holies (which has not been drawn since the last annual day of atonement), dropping the incense upon the live coals, the high priest passes under the protecting cloud of rising incense into the Presence chamber of Jehovah. This first entrance is for the specific purpose of placing the censer of incense, from which symbolical clouds of petition continually rise, within the Holy of holies. Reverently backing out of the sanctuary, for it would have been regarded as an impious thing to have turned the back upon the sacred ark and the Shekinah of God, the high priest takes in a vessel in his left hand some of the blood of the bullock which had been slain and comes again into the Holy of holies. Standing there before the ark of the covenant, the high priest dips the finger of his right hand into the blood and sprinkles it seven times upon the golden shining lid of the ark, i. e., upon the mercy seat between the cherubim, and seven times upon the floor of the Holy of holies, where he has been standing. Seven is the number of completeness, and *the high priest is now making full atonement for his own sins and those of the other priests.* Backing out again into the Holy place lots are then cast to determine which of the two he-goats that are at the door of the tabernacle is to be slain and which is to be the scape-goat. Then the he-goat for the people is slain. Taking in his left hand a vessel containing some

of the blood of the he-goat, the high priest again passes into the Holy of holies, and sprinkles as before the mercy seat and the floor with the blood of the he-goat *to make atonement for the sins of the people*. Also the altar of incense in the Holy place is sprinkled with the blood of the bullock and of the goat. Then at the door of the tabernacle the high priest places his hands upon the head of the live goat and confesses over the head of the goat the sins of priests and all the people; and a Levite, who has been appointed for the service, leads the goat away into the wilderness in the presence of all the people. To the neck of the goat was attached a piece of scarlet cloth, *symbol of the sins which he is bearing away*. It was the tradition of the Jews that until the last forty years before the Fall of Jerusalem this tongue of scarlet cloth had turned white in token of remission of sins. It was doubtless this cloth that the great prophet Isaiah had in mind when he said: "Though your sins be as scarlet" (even as scarlet as the scarlet cloth that hangs from the neck of the scapegoat) "they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wood." Now full atonement having been made for the sins of the priests and for the sins of the people, the high priest passes once more into the Holy of holies, brings out the censer, draws together the curtain for another year, lays aside his plain linen gar-

ments, fully bathes himself again, and puts on once more the gorgeous garments of his office. When he is fully attired in all his high-priestly glory, he comes out through the Holy place to the people, who as they hear the tinkle of the silver bells that hang about the bottom of his blue skirt, rejoice in their hearts that the work of atonement has been fully and successfully accomplished. Coming up to the great altar of burnt offering in the outer court, the high priest offers up the two rams of burnt offering, one for the priests and one for the people, in token of gratitude and self dedication to God; even so "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." After the offering of the rams of gratitude and self-dedication and consecration, the high priest blesses the people; and the gorgeous and impressive ceremonial of the day of atonement is over, not to be repeated again until one year from date.

"But Christ having come a high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation, nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For

if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (vs. 11-14). Though the furniture of the tabernacle was golden, and the high-priestly ceremonial of the great day of atonement was gorgeous, *they were destined to be temporary, because they did not really meet man's deepest need.* "But Christ," who has "come" as the "High Priest of the good things to come," "the good things" predicted by prophets and looked forward to for centuries by the Jewish people, "the good things" that are now actually here in the privileges of Christianity, has done and is doing a work of permanent value, because it deals effectively with the sin which really separates men from God and from their own highest possibilities. In vs. 11 and 12 the superiority of Christ's more excellent ministry *is manifested in four ways:* (1) he entered the true tabernacle through the greater and more perfect tabernacle; (2) he entered through his own blood; (3) he obtained an eternal redemption; (4) he entered "once for all." The "holy place," or true tabernacle, into which Christ entered is *the very home of God, the real dwelling place of the Almighty;* in pic-

torial language here set forth as a particular locality, corresponding to the Holy of holies in the earthly tabernacle; in reality the very audience chamber of the infinite Spirit, however conceived or described.

As the high priest on the great annual day of atonement passed through the first room, or Holy place, into the back room, or Holy of holies; so here Christ is represented as passing "through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation." *To what does our author refer by the phrase, "through the greater and more perfect tabernacle"?* Some interpreters, like Professor Bruce, prefer to regard the expression as a vague one, indefinite even in the mind of the writer, and say of it: "We have nothing here but a form of thought dictated by the parallel drawn between Christ and Aaron." This interpretation is for many reasons a fascinating one, and will doubtless commend itself to many students as the years roll on. Others would say that "the greater and more perfect tabernacle," through which Christ passed into the very Presence of God, is the realm of the lower heavens through which our great High Priest ascended, this thought having been first presented in chap. 4:14, where it is written, "Having, then, a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens." Others would divide heaven into two apartments, as it

were, literally corresponding to the apartments in the tabernacle, the first room being "the place of God's visible presence where He is manifested as an object of worship to angels and the spirits of just men made perfect, as distinguished from the proper abode of God whom no eye hath seen or can see, the celestial Holy of holies." Dale says: "The vestibule, the antechamber through which he passed, was surely that lower region of Divine communion in which He lived during the years of His humiliation. He breathed when here a divine air." Westcott calls attention to the fact that the first room was "not merely a portal into the second, but the appointed place of priestly service. 'Through' is not merely local but instrumental. The 'greater tabernacle' gathers up into one thought the various means under which God reveals Himself in the spiritual and through which men approach unto God." Many of the older interpreters regarded Christ's body or human nature as the greater and more perfect tabernacle. *Our Lord's human nature and earthly history* were to Him what the transit through the first division of the tabernacle was to the high priest of the old covenant, i. e., they *were the condition of His gaining entrance* into the most Holy place, the heavenly sanctuary, as the Great High Priest of mankind." This latter interpretation will probably satisfy more persons than any of the others.

“Nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood he entered.” Does our author mean that Christ literally and actually took His own blood with Him into heaven? Few of us to-day would be drawn to such literalism. Rather let us adopt the words of Professor Bruce: “In the Levitical system, blood sprinkling within the sanctuary was an essential feature in sacrifice. In connection with the better ministry there is no blood sprinkling except in a figure which has no value save as a symbol of a spiritual truth. Blood belongs to this world, and can find no place in heaven.” But the analogy that is here drawn is very clear. It was by means of blood that access to God was gained by the high priest of the old covenant, and it is by Christ’s blood that access to God is open to us. “Nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood.” At first thought we Western literalists are apt to lose sight of the symbolism of blood and the pictorial character of the priestly ceremonial of the old covenant, and are tempted to institute a comparison between two kinds of blood instead of two kinds of sacrifice. “Blood, whether of man or of beast, is a material, corruptible thing. Chemically considered, I suppose, there is not much difference between the blood of man and that of beast. But what a difference between the victims!” The blood of goats and calves “that

was shed on the great day of atonement was the blood of *involuntary* sacrifices, the brute beasts having no foreknowledge of the coming sacrifice and no ability to consent to the offering nor to understand the significance of the giving up of life. Is such an offering to be compared for a moment to the act of Christ in partaking of human nature, living a life of perfect obedience and loyalty to duty at every point, doing "always those things that please Him," even to the tasting of death for every man and giving His life a ransom for many? What He did He did of His own accord, freely and lovingly. *Surely such an offering is of incalculable worth.*

Having shown *the scene*, or condition, of Christ's High-priestly work, and *the character* of His offering, our author declares *the efficacy* of His sacrifice. "Entered in once for all into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." On the great annual day of atonement the high priest of the old covenant by the offering of the blood of goats and calves obtained for himself, his fellow priests, and for the people, an *annual* redemption; not because there was any intrinsic value in the blood, i. e., a year's worth of atonement, but because God Himself had established this faith-teaching, faith-testing ceremonial system by obedience to which remission of certain offences against the ceremonial law was granted and those who had offended were

given the privileges of the tabernacle, i. e., of access to God through the priests, given as it were "a fair start for another year." On the other hand, the blood of Christ, who had power in Himself to lay His life down and to take it again, who freely and lovingly gave His life for the sins of the people—this blood pictorially represented here as being taken by Him up into heaven "*procured by its transcendent essential merit perpetual remission of all sin*, took away the whole sin of the world, and so gave mankind a new start, not for a new year, but for a new unending era of grace." *The Old Testament high priest by his offering on the day of atonement procured an annual, partial, and imputed redemption; Christ by His offering on Calvary obtained for His people an eternal, complete, and actual redemption.*

The last point of superiority is a natural sequence of this thought of eternal redemption. The Old Testament high priest went once every year into the Holy of holies; the Great High Priest of Christianity went into the true sanctuary *once for all*. At first thought this annual repetition of the day of atonement might seem to furnish a matter of superiority in favor of the Levitical system. How anxiously and eagerly the people looked forward to "the covering" of sin each year on this great day! What a blessing they felt its privileges to be! How their

hearts fed upon the fascinating mysteries of its gorgeous ceremonial! But our author would have these Hebrew Christians see that, in the very nature of the case, the day of atonement, standing as it did for the remission of sin, *its very repetition was an evidence of its weakness and unsatisfactoriness. It did not remedy the real evil. It did not actually take away sin.* The annual observance of the Passover was the yearly commemoration of a completed work, the Exodus from Egypt, a work done once for all; but in the repetition of the day of atonement there is "an annual remembrance of sin rather than of redemption from sin." Christ's work, on the contrary, is the basis of an eternal redemption; He therefore entered "*once for all.*"

Nor should this thought of its eternal validity be a hard one to receive; "For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (vs. 13 and 14). If the offerings of the Levitical system were efficacious in their sphere, why should we not believe that the superior offering of Christ is efficacious in its sphere? By "the blood of goats and bulls" our author refers, as is verse 12, to the offerings of

the day of atonement by which the forgiveness of sins was symbolized, and all technical or ceremonial disabilities on account of sin to the service of God were removed. By "the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled" our author refers to the Levitical provision for the removal of any ceremonial defilement contracted by accidental contact with a dead body, as described in Num. 19: A red heifer was slain and burnt, its ashes being preserved in water, and on the third and seventh day purification was effected by sprinkling with a bunch of hyssop dipped in this water. By combining the two references, one to the offerings on the annual day of atonement for sin for the whole nation, and the other to the ritual for the removal of occasional ceremonial defilements, our author aims to do full justice to the whole provision of the law for the removal of impurities, whether from contact with sin or death. Whatever offences had been committed against the ritual of Leviticalism, could be removed by Levitical sacrifices. *So far as fleshly disabilities to the service of God were concerned, these could be removed by such sacrifices as these.* They did restore a man to ceremonial cleanness and make a person technically pure before God. If they were offered in sincerity and truth, with true penitence for sin on the part of the offerer, they had a further and deeper efficacy, *not by virtue of any intrinsic*

merits that they had in themselves, but simply and solely by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ eternally purposed in the mind of the Father and heartily endorsed by the devoted spirit of the Son "before the foundation of the world," though as an historic fact that great sacrifice of Christ did not take place upon earth until centuries after this Levitical system had been established, of which great sacrifice of Christ every Levitical offering was in some true sense a type and prophecy.

These sacrifices were able to sanctify "unto the cleanness of the flesh." "How much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Two kinds of sacrifice were necessary under the old covenant to remove impurity, and these sacrifices, i. e., "blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled" were able only to cleanse *the flesh* of the worshipers. Something more was necessary if sinful man was to dwell in peace and fellowship with a righteous God. *Down deep in the heart there was the consciousness of sins untouched by Levitical sacrifices.* And this sense of sin kept men away from full fellowship with God and from the highest services of their lives. Is there anywhere a sacrifice sufficient to cleanse men's innermost selves from the consciousness of sin and to set them free from the dead works of ceremonial-

ism, self-righteousness, and legalism that they may serve God with a free, full and loving spirit? Yes, there is such a provision in the sacrifice of Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God," and is able to "cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." *In what does the excellence of the offering of Christ consist?* According to our author it consists in three things: (a) Himself, (b) spotless, (c) through the eternal Spirit. First *His offering was Himself*. In Leviticalism the priest and his sacrifice had no vital connection with each other. Here priest and sacrifice are one and the same. Under the Levitical system the sacrifice was simply a part of one's possessions, some *thing* that one owned. Here the offering was Himself. It is a comparatively easy thing to offer one's money. It is a superlatively greater thing to give one's self. There was *no moral character* in the Levitical sacrifice, and hence no essential worth. Secondly, *He was spotless "without blemish."* Every precaution was taken in the old covenant to have the animals offered sound in body, spotless physically; but what a perfection was His! Physically, mentally, morally, without a flaw. Not a bone of His body was broken; at the flood tide of manhood with the world before Him He gave Himself. Intellectually, the Teacher of the ages; emotionally, the Mr. Greatheart of human history; voli-

tionally, the only member of the race who has ever been able honestly to say, "I do always those things that please Him." What perfection of offering in Him who was without spot and without blemish, "the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" No wonder that Peter stimulated his Christian brethren to holiness of living with the thought. "Knowing that ye were redeemed not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, *even the blood of Christ.*"

Thirdly, it was *through the eternal Spirit* that He offered Himself without blemish unto God. This phrase is the most emphatic phrase of all, special attention being called to it by the repetition of the word "eternal." He is the Author of an *eternal* redemption, eternal because through the *eternal* Spirit He offered Himself. There are two possible readings of the original. The two words may be translated, "through an eternal spirit," the reference being in this case to His own spirit burning with desire to do always the will of God and yearning to bless men; this is the marginal reading in the American Revised Version. Or the words may be translated, "through the eternal Spirit," the reference being to the divine Holy Spirit which animated Him and worked through Him; this is the reading of the Revised Version and the translation of the King

James' Version and of the text of the American Revised Version. Understanding that the latter translation is the correct one, we would here be reminded that "the Spirit of the Lord was upon him" (Luke 4: 18), that he cast out demons "by the Spirit of God" (Matt. 12: 28), that "God gave not the Spirit by measure unto Him" (John 3: 24), that He was "quickened by the Spirit" (1 Pet. 3: 18), etc., etc. We are reminded by this phrase, "through the eternal Spirit," that *Christ's sacrifice was a divine act*. That "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," which verse means little if anything, unless Christ is God, and Christ's offering a divine act. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," etc., is meaningless, *unless what Jesus does God does, unless Jesus is God*. The same thing may be said of a host of familiar texts that come crowding to the front, when we read the phrase, "through the eternal Spirit he offered himself." How He could be both God and man is a question which often troubles our intellects, but need not disturb our faith, or disquiet our hearts. We can quietly rest with the millions of the ages in the great scriptural thought that "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, not reckoning unto them their trespasses, and having committed unto us the word of reconciliation." "Him who knew no sin he made to

be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." The sacrifice of Christ was "through the eternal Spirit." As Dr. Dale has said: "When God determined to have mercy upon man, He did not command or permit holy angels to endure the sufferings which men deserved, nor did He command or permit an innocent man to sink under the awful burden of the iniquities of the race; but since it belonged to Himself to maintain the eternal distinction between right and wrong, and He had resolved not to maintain it in this case by inflicting just penalties on those who had sinned, He came into the world Himself in the Person of the Son, assuming our nature that He might become capable of suffering, and the suffering of Christ was the act of the Eternal Spirit." This thought is found in many places in Scripture prominently expressed, and the reading and interpretation "through the Eternal Spirit" have very much in their favor.

If, on the other hand, we read "through an eternal spirit," the reference is primarily to *the mind that was in Jesus all through his life* both before He came to earth and throughout His earthly ministry, the mind which still animates Him in His heavenly ministry. Not the fact that He shed His blood, but the spirit in which it was shed, becomes according to this interpretation the more prominent characteristic of His work.

As Westcott puts it, "Other sacrifices were wrought by the hand, being outward acts of the flesh; but this was wrought by that which is highest in man's nature, whereby he holds fellowship with God." That is to say, *Christ's sacrifice was a truly spiritual act.* Professor Bruce is specially strong in his advocacy of the reading "through an eternal spirit." Christ's sacrifice is seen to have eternal validity, because of the spirit in which it was done. As an historical event it matters not whether it should take place at the beginning or in the midst or at the close of human history; the spirit in which it was done and of which it is the climacterate expression is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever, and gives eternal validity to the sacrifice. Nor does it matter *where* this offering should take place, in Palestine or in America, on earth or in heaven. *Its excellence and validity are dependent neither upon time nor place.* According to the interpretation, "through an eternal spirit," we have this distinction, that "the blood of Christ" refers to "His sacrifice in terms of parallelism with Levitical sacrifices," while the term, "through an eternal spirit," reveals the superiority and essential character of Christ's work as *moral*. As Dr. Bruce expresses the thought: "Yes, the blood, according to the Scriptures, is the soul of a living animal, and in the blood of the slain victim its soul or life was presented as an offering to

God by the officiating priest. But in connection with the sacrifice of Christ, we must think of the higher human soul, the Divine spirit. It was as a spirit He offered Himself, as a self-conscious, free, moral personality; and His offering was a spirit revealed through a never-to-be-forgotten act of self-surrender, not the literal blood shed on Calvary which in itself possessed no more intrinsic value than the blood of Levitical sacrifices." This interpretation from Professor Bruce is in line with the tendency of much of our modern thought, which makes the self-emptying of Christ referred to in Phil. 2: 7 a complete though temporary resignation of the privileges of the God-head and which strongly emphasizes the ethical element in the work of Christ. The interpretation, "through the eternal Spirit," is the more generally accepted view (as is manifest from the various English versions of our Bible), and is in line with that method of thought which interprets or tends to interpret all of the work of Christ from the divine point of view.

Whatever interpretation we may give to the phrase the effect of Christ's sacrificial work is plainly declared to be "eternal redemption," and the cleansing of "the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Whether we are able to understand the exact significance of the atonement or not, *we may rest confidently in the fact that Scripture reveals, which the Holy Spirit*

attests, to which the Universal Church through the ages has borne witness, for which the human heart yearns, and which personal experience confirms, that a satisfactory sacrifice, the ideal sacrifice, has been made by the Lord Jesus Christ, acceptable to God and sufficient for man, able to "cleanse the conscience from dead works to serve the living God." Whatever our theory of the atonement, or idea of the significance of Christ's life and death with reference to the relations of God and man as those relations have been disturbed by sin, let us be sure that by faith we consciously and constantly keep the fact before us that *reconciliation has actually taken place through Christ*. Then, assured of complete pardon for all our past sins and of adequate provision for all future needs, we shall not feel ourselves borne down under the awful load of guilt, separated from God by our iniquities and weakened by the paralyzing sense of failure; but "conscience," or our religious consciousness, shall find itself set free from fear of God, set free from the bondage of the dead works of Leviticalism, set free from all that is legal, and formal and dead in service everywhere. And this cleansing of the conscience is *not an end in itself, but a means to an end*. The various purifications of the Old Testament were for the purpose of removing ceremonial disability that was keeping any Jew away from the tabernacle and the serv-

ice of God. They did not render worship, praise and obedience unnecessary; but were the means by which all were made possible. So also we, by the work of Christ, are saved to serve. *His work is the basis of our access and of our worship.* This wonderful love of Christ, manifested throughout His whole life of loyal and loving obedience to the law of love and duty, righteousness and service, whether that life be thought of in its heavenly career before His days upon earth or in its perfection here among men or in its high-priestly intercession at the right hand—this wonderful love of Christ, the climacteric demonstration of which will always be seen in His "blood" and in His "cross," in His "tasting death for every man," is the crowning proof of the love of the Father and is able, when apprehended by us through faith, to cleanse our "conscience from dead works to serve the living God," and to drive us on in a life of conscious communion with Him and of jealous activity for men. "For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they who live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again."

Once, But Only Once



Chapter IX, verse 15—X, verse 18.

NOW that our author has shown in chapter 7 the superior features of the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ, in chapter 8 the ideal scene and new-covenant conditions of His High-priestly work, and in chap. 9, vs. 1-14 His more excellent ministry as compared with the service of the "Levitical high priest in the most gorgeous and impressive ceremonial of the day of atonement, a ministry by which "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God," cleanses the "conscience from dead works to serve the living God"; it would seem at first thought that the end of the argument had surely come, and that, such a thorough-going High-priestly work having been accomplished by Christ, the triumphal closing words of chap. 10, v. 18 might even here be used: "Now where remission of these is, there is no offering for sin." *We* are so apt to forget that *the truths so familiar to us* about the new covenant and the more excellent ministry, and specially about the significance of Christ's death,

were almost if not entirely new and strange to the original readers of this Epistle. The High-priestly work of Christ had never been understood by those Hebrew Christians. As we read in Acts 21:20, "many thousands" there were "among the Jews that believed," but they were "all jealous for the law"; acknowledging Christ they still clung to Moses; the spiritual significance of the promise of a new covenant by Jeremiah and of the new relations established by Christ had never been appreciated by them, while the death of Christ had always been and was still a great stumbling block to their faith. Their very tendency to apostatize to Judaism was largely caused by just such a lack of Christian knowledge, and it is our author's keenly felt and plainly expressed conviction throughout this Epistle that it is only through their acquiring such Christian knowledge that the fascination of Judaism will be dispelled and the tendency to apostatize forever destroyed.

Our author, therefore, instead of at once closing his argument with his clear statement of Christ's more excellent ministry in chap. 9, v. 14, proceeds to make more manifest still the significance of Christ's death, which, he declares, must have taken place "once," but "only once." Instead of the death of Christ being a stumbling block to these Hebrew Christians, it should be their glory; for Christ's offering is the very ideal of sacrifice, i. e., it was "Himself, offered with-

out blemish unto God," and "through the eternal Spirit"; a sacrifice sufficient to cleanse the conscience and set one "free from dead works to serve the living God"; such a superlatively excellent sacrifice makes a new covenant a necessity and shows Him to be indeed the fit Inaugurator of the very covenant promised centuries ago by the divinely-inspired prophet Jeremiah. "And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of an eternal inheritance" (v. 15). Everywhere throughout the study of this Epistle, and the Bible in general, it should be constantly kept in mind that, as Dr. Westcott says, "*The Scriptural idea of blood is essentially an idea of life, not of death*"; *the blood represents the life, even as Moses said centuries before Harvey discovered in the circulation of the blood the secret of health, "the blood is the life"; blood poured out represents "the energy of a life made available for others."* The glory and efficacy of the sacrificial death of Christ are set forth in this and the following verses from several points of view, because our writer by every means would try to help these Christian Jews to understand at least a part of its meaning; no one thought could exhaust its climacteric significance. In verse 15 *two great benefits* are said to flow from the new covenant

of which Christ by His death has become the mediator: (1) full redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, and (2) the actual and effective attainment of the inheritance. We must remember constantly that the range of the Levitical sacrifices was very narrow indeed, that they did not actually grapple with moral offences as such, that they were fleshy ordinances able to deal with external uncleanness only and unable to purify the conscience; they had to do with bodily impurity, ceremonial offences, sins of ignorance, and certain specified transgressions; but with high-handed sins and the deeply-rooted moral evil of the heart they were unable to cope. These deep iniquities of God's covenant people had been accumulating year by year, in spite of the gorgeous ceremonial of annual days of atonement, when propitiatory sacrifices were offered for the ignorances of the past year, in spite of rivers of blood of bulls and goats, in spite of the countless sin offerings presented by individuals, until now mountain high they loomed toward heaven, and weighed down the inheritance with indebtedness until it was practically worthless. *What it was impossible for such sacrifices to remove Christ has borne away;* even as the scapegoat on the annual day of atonement pictorially carried away the sins of the Jewish people, so Christ has actually carried away the sins of the world. Moreover, His work of

purification and atonement not only has removed this awful load of past indebtedness, but also actually brings here and now the realization of the inheritance in part, and promises full enjoyment of its privileges in the great future; *because of what He has done, we have access to the Father.*

And this thought of "inheritance" helps us also to think of Christ's death from another point of view: "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth" (vs. 16-17). The Greek word translated in verse 16 "testament" means both "covenant" and "testament," and there has been much discussion among the commentators as to how to translate the word here. The uniform meaning of the word in other parts of this Epistle and elsewhere in the New Testament is "covenant," although it seems clear that in these two verses, 16 and 17, the word should be translated "testament" or "will." Indeed the new order of things by which we have access to God is *both a covenant and a testament*; a covenant in the sense that the promises of grace are bestowed upon us on the condition of faith, a testament in the sense that the peace of the kingdom and the kingdom itself were bequeathed by Christ to His disciples on the eve of His death, when He said,

"My peace I leave with you," and "I appoint unto you a kingdom," and also in the sense that there is no due proportion between what God requires of us and what He yearns and intends to bestow upon us. *Christ's death was necessary to make the inheritance sure.* The death of a testator makes his will irrevocable, and brings the heirs into immediate possession. Think of Christ's death for a moment from that point of view.

And now to revert once more to the thought of the new covenant, let us note that *Christ's death is related to the ratifying of the new covenant as the sprinkling of blood was related to the ratifying of the old covenant.* As death is necessary as the condition of inheritance by testament, so death is necessary to ratify a covenant. "Wherefore even the first *covenant* hath not been dedicated without blood. For when every commandment had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward. Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood and apart from shedding of blood

there is no remission. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us" (vs. 18-24). In order to help these Christian Jews to see that Christ's death and His being the Mediator of a new covenant are not at all incongruous thoughts, our author draws an analogy between the inauguration of the old covenant and the new. In his description of the inauguration of the old covenant he does not, however, confine himself strictly to the Old Testament account, omitting some details and also adding certain particulars from tradition; he says nothing of the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings made by the young men who were acting *pro tempore* as priests, but speaks only of the sacrificial acts performed by Moses, who was the mediator of the first covenant; also, perhaps for the purpose of adding to the vividness of the picture, or to grant even the most that was claimed by tradition, he mentions "with water and scarlet wool and hyssop" (water with which the blood was diluted, a stick of hyssop upon which the wool was bound, and wool which as a sponge sucked up the blood); nor in the Old Testament record of this event is there any men-

tion of the sprinkling of "the book," nor of any "goats" having been slain; nor is any mention made there of any sprinkling of "the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry with blood," though they were anointed with oil. Inasmuch, however, as both blood and oil were used in consecrating holy persons, probably both were used in dedicating sacred things; the sprinkling with blood indicated sanctification in the negative sense of removing sin, while the anointing with oil indicated sanctification in the positive sense of setting apart for sacred service. Both were doubtless used at the dedication of the tabernacle. Josephus says that when the tabernacle was dedicated both tabernacle and vessels were anointed with fragrant oil and sprinkled with the blood of bulls and rams and goats; but only the blood is mentioned by our author because he is preparing the way for his general observation in verse 22 concerning the function of blood-shedding and blood-sprinkling in the Old Testament economy: "And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission." *Ratification, purification, remission, all of these things in the old covenant were closely connected with, signified by, and dependent upon, the shedding and sprinkling of blood.*

This constant use of blood, which signifies life poured forth and made available for others, in

the divinely ordained system of Judaism, must have typified and foreshadowed something similar but of infinitely superior worth in the new covenant. Our author does not go deeply into the philosophy of the atonement, and tell us in this classical passage upon sacrifice *the exact reason for His death*; but leaves this great mystery where the rest of Scripture leaves it a mystery still; the death of Christ *was* necessary, necessary to purge past sins, necessary to open a way of access to all into the very presence of God, necessary to make the testament of God valid, necessary as a means of cleansing the conscience from dead works to enable us to serve the living God, necessary to ratify the covenant; all of these things under the old covenant were partially and pictorially set forth by the shedding of blood; so if they were really and completely to be accomplished under the new covenant there must be a better sacrifice; *but just exactly what that reason is in the nature of God, or man, or in their relations to each other, that required nothing less than the death of Christ before ideal relations could be established between God and man, our author does not tell us.* He simply says, "Death *there* and a sprinkling of blood for purification, remission, ratification; a better sacrifice *here* for a similar purpose." We, as they, are asked to accept *the fact* but are not told of its deepest mystery; though we, like

they, may find intellectual relief by looking at it from many points of view and catching glimpses of what its deep philosophy may be. *The heart at least finds rest in the fact*, that Jesus saw in the old economy a type of His own sacrifice, and in the fact that both type and antitype were ordained of God, while the Holy Spirit uniformly led the New Testament preachers and writers plainly to declare the fact of the superlative value of His sacrifice, to the heart satisfying value of which the Church Universal through her greatest teachers, most eminent saints, and the constant personal experiences of her humblest and highest members, bears practically unanimous testimony.

As some one has said, three inferences with reference to sacrifice are certainly legitimate at this point: (1) From the types and shadows of the Old Testament we naturally infer that there must be *some sort of sacrifice* under the new covenant; (2) this sacrifice *must be a better one* than the fleshly sacrifices of the old covenant; (3) this sacrifice of Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish unto God," *is infinitely superior to any or all of the Levitical sacrifices, indeed the best sacrifice imaginable, absolutely ideal.* "It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For

Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." In this description of the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, there is one point which is difficult of interpretation. *In what sense* can it be said that "the heavenly things themselves *needed to be cleansed* with better sacrifices? *Why did they need cleansing at all?* Several explanations have been given with reference to this hard question. Those who always stickle for the literal interpretation even of Oriental pictorial language, see in these representations authority for a *two-fold division of heaven* into a first and second room as in the earthly tabernacle, which with similar literalness is supposed to be an exact copy of the heavenly tabernacle. On the great day of atonement the high priest sprinkled the blood of cleansing even upon the floor of the Holy of holies, in order to purify it from the defilement it had contracted, though sacred in itself, from contact with sinful men: so also the real tabernacle in the heavens, though as holy and pure as God Himself, needs Christ's atoning blood to make it approachable to sinful man, because of the awful shadow "cast upon God's face by human guilt." As one has put it, "We should 'defile the very presence of God apart from the work of Christ.'" Other interpreters of this Epistle see in the phrase

"the heavenly things themselves" not a geographical reference to a local, perfect tabernacle in the skies where God is supposed to dwell, but a reference to that which is real and abiding as opposed to the apparent and the perishable, the spiritual as opposed to the material, the heart and conscience and life as opposed to the ceremonial and fleshly. By the "heavenly things themselves" our author, who has manifestly risen high about the trammels of the external into the real appreciation of the spiritual meaning of Christianity, refers to the spiritual world in general, just as in verse 14 he spoke of the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to "cleanse the conscience from dead works to serve the living God"; though in reasoning with these Christian Jews he constantly uses figures drawn from the tabernacle service with which they were so familiar. He would lift them if possible from the realm of the visible and emblematic into the realm of the spiritual and real; man's heart needs to be purified that it may become the true dwelling-place of the Almighty, a temple of the Holy Spirit; it is in this real world of the Spirit where God the Father of spirits dwells, not confined to Gerizim or to Jerusalem, but worshiped anywhere by those who worship in spirit and truth, that Christ appears before the face of God on our behalf; not as the Levitical high priest appeared in the darkened room of the Holy of holies, veiled as he was

by a cloud of incense, but appearing openly before God's very Presence on our behalf. "In Him humanity obtains its true harmony with God and in Him it can bear the full light of His Brightness." *Because He is there, we may come also boldly to the throne of grace and find grace and mercy to help in time of need.* No blood of bulls and goats could accomplish what He has accomplished; no such sacrifices as those would have the dignity and worth that such a realm demands; "the heavenly things themselves" need "better sacrifices than these."

Having reiterated in vs. 15-24 that it was necessary from various points of view for Christ "once to die," in vs. 25-28 our author declares that it *was necessary* "only once": "Nor yet that he should offer himself often; as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once at the end of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this *cometh* judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation." Having stated that it was necessary for Christ "once" to die, a thought which he has tried in so many ways to impress upon these

Hebrew Christians, it would have been perfectly natural for some one, fascinated with the annual recurrence of the gorgeous ceremonial of the day of atonement and not even yet appreciating the glory and finality of Christ's ideal sacrifice of Himself, to have thought within himself, "Yes; but even still the advantage is with Leviticalism, for *there* there is an annual and hence *oft-repeated* atoning sacrifice; how much more satisfactory and reasonable it would seem if Christ's sacrifice were *often* made." But our author spurns such a suggestion as an absurdity in the very nature of the case, when one considers that Christ's offering was "the sacrifice of himself." *Old Testament annual sacrifices were repeated year by year because they did not effectively deal with the fact of sin, they did not meet the real need.* Such repeated priestly ministrations and such sacrifices of involuntary brutes, sacrifices that did not have any moral value, could not radically affect moral conditions. Moreover, for Christ to die over and over again "from the foundation of the world" (for with the beginning of sin man's need began, and if Christ's sacrifice had only temporary value it must have been repeated often from the beginning of human sin) is *an unthinkable proposition.* Christ's sacrifice was of such a nature as to effect for him a *permanent* entrance into the holy place; He entered there *to abide there*, not need-

ing to come out as the old-covenant priest did, and enter again a year from date; the holy place has become *His home*. Christ's sacrifice, so essentially spiritual, ideal and perfect, is independent of time and place; and, though it took place "at the end of the ages," as it were, after all the preliminary periods that have gone before this last great Messianic time, *its value and efficacy are eternal, reaching back to the beginning of sin and stretching on to the end of time*. Those Old Testament priests were *pigmies*, striving to handle the problem of sin, but never able to remove the awful burden of iniquity; but He, triumphant Son of God and Man, at the consummation of the ages when all others had failed, in the fullness of God's time, by one supreme sacrifice of Himself has actually annihilated sin, has made it as if it had never been; He, the seed of the woman, has actually bruised the serpent's head with a fatal wound; no longer shall sin keep the conscience in bondage or necessarily separate men from Jehovah, for every one who fully accepts His completed sacrifice can always exultantly cry, "There is now therefore no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus." Sin in its separating power has been destroyed, and all who will can now through Him have permanent access to God. *Such a sacrifice needs no repetition.*

This idea of His dying often is plainly *absurd*; for

Christ in His blessed work for humanity became a *real man*, and men die only once; this is the law of life. Who ever heard of such a thing as a man dying, and then returning to life again just to die and return to life once more, and so on indefinitely? Moreover, if it is *the spirit* of a sacrifice that makes its worth, and if Christ offered Himself without blemish unto God through the eternal Spirit, could numberless repetitions of His offering add any to its moral value? No, no! it was done "once," and "once for all." He cried on the cross, "It is finished," and earth and heaven have been ever since re-echoing in approval and complete satisfaction, "Amen! It *is* finished!" "As it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this *cometh* judgment; so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time" (not to die again upon a cross, for He now liveth for ever more; not to bear the sins of many by one sacrifice as he did once; "not to be made sin for us who knew no sin;" not to redeem the world, but to judge the world and bless His own, "apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation." After man's death comes judgment, and after Christ's sacrifice comes the revelation of His glory to all that wait for Him, to whom His appearance will mean full salvation. When the Old Testament high priest made atonement for the ignorances of priest and people on the great

annual day of atonement, he was dressed in the plain garments of the ordinary priest, in humiliation for sin, as a sin-bearer and in closest union with the people; but when the atonement and intercession had been completed the high priest laid aside his plain garments, put on the gorgeous garments of his high-priestly office, and walking out through the tabernacle appeared in the midst of the people in all his glory to bless them with his benediction and with his presence. So Christ, having completed the work of sacrifice upon earth, a sacrifice wrought out in the garments of ordinary humanity and in humiliation for sin, and having now passed with His ideal offering into the real Presence of the Infinite God where He is now ever living to make intercession for us, *shall appear to us again, not as a sin-bearer or in humiliation, but in all of the gorgeous garments of His High-priestly office, coming "on the clouds in His glory, the holy angels with Him."* First He was manifested (for He lived before He came to earth) as our teacher and our sacrifice; now He appears before the face of God for us as our Priest and Intercessor; again He will be manifested as Judge of all the earth and our King. Blessed are they that are preparing for His appearing!

Before we consider chap. 10, vs. 1-18, in which we have *the conclusion of our author's argument for the superiority of Christ's High-priestly*

work, and his last word of remarkable boldness upon the insufficiency of Leviticalism; let us sum up for a moment the main points which he has made: Christ is not only as good as the priests of the Old Testament in that He possesses that which was their glory, i. e., human sympathy and divine appointment, but He is much better than they are. He possesses these characteristics in a higher, yes, in a perfect degree, and also other characteristics which make Him personally the Ideal Priest. He ministers in the real Presence of God as the Mediator of a new and ideal covenant, and His sacrificial service actually accomplishes the end desired by bringing the worshiper into vital, constant and conscious communion with God. The descendants of Aaron were priests and priests only, Christ, like Melchizedek was both a Priest and a King; they were priests only for a few years, He is a Priest forever; they were merely links in a long succession, inheriting the priesthood from their ancestors on a purely physical basis and likewise handing it down to their descendants irrespective of the moral character of these descendants. His Priesthood is absolutely unique, independent of all predecessors or successors, indeed without any predecessors or successors, a Priesthood dependent upon His own inherent worth and eternal Sonship; their priesthood depended merely upon a carnal ordinance, His Priesthood is

founded upon the unchangeable oath of God; they were sinful and needed atonement first for their own sins before they were even ceremonially fit to officiate in a merely ritualistic service for their fellows, He was absolutely and always sinless; their sacrifices were performed daily, His was offered once for all. They stand and minister as trembling suppliants, He mediates royally as a Son sitting at the right hand of the Majesty on high; their tabernacle was merely a copy, a symbol, materialistic and perishable, He ministers in the real tabernacle, the actual Presence of the living God. Their covenant was very unsatisfactory, external in its laws, partial in its privileges, and only pictorially cleansing from sin; His covenant is the ideal covenant, with God's laws written in the regenerate heart, with the privileges of God open to all, and with full and final forgiveness of sin; their covenant is doomed to pass away, His covenant will abide. Their sacrifices were fleshly ordinances capable merely of removing ceremonial defilement; His sacrifice was the ideal sacrifice, it was Himself offered through the eternal Spirit without blemish unto God and dealing fully and forever with the guilt and burden of the conscience. The Levitical priests only entered temporarily once a year, and then only under certain strict conditions; He entered once for all to abide there as in His home unto the end. *What folly, then, what in-*

gratitude, what a loss, what infinite peril to turn away from such ideal provisions to that which was so shadowy and temporary and unsatisfactory!

“For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the *things*, can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more conscience of sins? But in those *sacrifices* there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (vs. 1-4). Even so far back in his argument as chap. 8:5 our author had said that the tabernacle of the old covenant was but a copy of reality, while here, referring doubtless specially to the offerings of the day of atonement, he repeats the thought that the sacrifices and regulations were only “a shadow,” a rude outline cast upon the wall, “of the good things to come,” thus declaring both the inherent weakness and the provisional function of the Levitical sacrifices. As Professor Bruce so well puts it: “In its comprehensive reference as an atonement for the whole people; in the sin-offering presented by the high priest for himself, before offering for the people; in the dress worn by the high priest on that occasion; in the proximity of the solemn season to the feast

of tabernacles, which followed four days after, and to the jubilee, which began on the evening of the same day—the religious ceremonial of the tenth day of the seventh month bore a shadowy resemblance to the transaction by which the sin of the world was really atoned for. It foreshadowed an atonement for all, by a perfectly holy Person, humbling Himself unto death, and procuring for men true liberty, peace and joy. But how rude and barely recognizable the resemblance! The atonement, annual, partial, putative; the holiness of the priest, not real but ritual; his humiliation an affair of dress, not an experience of temptation, sorrow and pain; the feast of tabernacles, a halcyon period of *seven* days; the year of jubilee, a twelve month of freedom, preceded and followed by fifty years of servitude, not an unending era of freedom and gladness." Since the law was just "a shadow," a mere outline, and not "the true historic form," the gospel being "as much closer a resemblance of the Reality as a statue is a closer resemblance than a penciled outline," it could *never*, with such sacrifices which are *the same* year after year, give to the worshipers *the true sense of real pardon*. "Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers having been once cleansed, would have had no more conscience" (or rather consciousness) "of sin?" There was, as a matter of fact, no such cleansing of the con-

science from sin through *such* sacrifice, "but in those *sacrifices* there is a remembrance made of sins year by year." Is this not clear? *Not a removal but a remembrance.* "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins." Such an offering might perhaps satisfy some dull, unthinking soul; but surely no one of you with any degree of spiritual enlightenment or sense of sin ever found any *lasting peace or rest* in such sacrifices; perhaps for a short time there was a feeling of partial relief, but ever and anon the burden returned; deep down in the heart was the craving for something better. It became manifest that the day of atonement was rather a burden than a blessing, for neither were sins put away and actually covered, nor was the sense of separation from God destroyed. How many times the heart with great misgivings asked the question, "Can it be that the blood of bulls and goats can take away my sins?" *Surely some superior sacrifice is necessary!*

"Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith,

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not,
But a body didst thou prepare for me;
In whole burnt offerings and
sacrifices for sin thou hadst no pleasure:
Then said I, Lo I come
(In the roll of the book it is
Written of me)
To do Thy will, O God.

Saying above, sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (which are offered according to the law), then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (vs. 5-10). These verses, studied side by side with the plain statement of chap. 9, v. 14, declare emphatically the true nature of the sacrifice of Christ as being essentially a spirit of passionate obedience to God's will. The quotation in this passage is from Psalm 40: 6-8, which psalm is *primarily* and *historically* the expression of David's personal gratitude and devotion to God; but the Psalm has in it certain elements of the *ideal*, far beyond anything ever realized by the actual king of the Davidic line. This ideal element, according to the universal custom of Old Testament interpretation, is conceived of as referring necessarily to that greater Son of David, who was actually to realize the high sentiments of the psalmist. With no forcing, therefore, of the original passage these words are seen to be a true description of the spirit of David's Greater Son, and are pictorially presented as actually taken by Him upon His lips at the beginning of His ministry upon earth. Surely no other Psalm that the Master studied in the synagogue school,

or in the home of His godly mother, could have been a more natural and irresistible inspiration to His first recorded utterance "I must be about My Father's business," nor could any other words in the Psalter have been a more fitting motto for Him who could truthfully say, "I do always those things that please Him." *He, surely, of all the sons of men could say in a superlative sense, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."*

Let us further note that our author does not quote the Psalm exactly as we have it in our Old Testament, but quotes from the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, which was at this time the version of the Scriptures in common use; also he quotes a line that does not accurately represent the Hebrew original, though as we shall see the sense of the passage is truly given:

"Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not,
But a body didst thou prepare for me."

This last clause reads in our Old Testament translation (Please turn to Psalm 40: 6), which is based upon the original Hebrew, "Mine ears hast thou opened." *Our New Testament writers in quoting from the Scriptures were never so very particular to quote just the exact words; they evidently felt that the truth of Scripture did not rest so much in the very words as in the sense.* How often people quote certain words from the Bible, interpreting them according to their

own preconceived or pet notions, and so often doing violence to the context, and then tell us "The Bible says so and so." The *sense* of the words is Scripture, not the very words themselves. In our author's quotation from the Septuagint the *main* thought of the passage is the same as in the Hebrew, though the words and thought of the one clause are slightly different. In the Hebrew Psalm we read:

"Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in;
Mine ears hast thou opened (or pierced)."

By the phrase, "Mine ears hast thou opened," the thought expressed in view of the context is "Thou hast opened my understanding to appreciate the real demands of the law for true obedience"; or, if the marginal translation is to be used, we read, "Mine ears hast thou bored or pierced," referring to that ancient custom by which one, who had been sold into slavery for debt and had now worked out his obligation, could, if he so desired, become the servant of his beloved master forever: "Then his master shall bring him unto the judges and shall bring him to the door, or unto the doorpost; and his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever" (Ex. 21: 6); in this case the reference is also plainly to *the spirit of willing obedience*. In the Septuagint translation, which our author uses, we read:

"But a body didst thou prepare for me,"

in which words as applied to Christ we have a reference to his human nature and earthly life, a God-given opportunity or sphere in which this spirit of willing obedience could be beautifully and thoroughly manifested. By the phrase, "In the roll of the book it is written of me" the Psalmist doubtless referred to the roll of the Law in which the principle of perfect obedience is set forth, while the reference of the passage from the point of view of David's Greater Son would be to the general picture throughout the whole Old Testament of the ideal servant of Jehovah.

It is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins; in such sacrifices, though the same sacrifices be repeated year after year, there is no *removal* of sin, but rather a *remembrance* made of sin. Rivers of blood of bulls and goats from Jewish altars would not be pleasing to God; they in themselves were worthless, *only valuable at all as they represented a spirit of obedience*. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"; this is the truth that the prophets of God through the ages have been constantly declaring. What God wants is the spirit of perfect and willing obedience. And so when Christ came into the world, He did not come to perform some great, bloody, Jewish sacrifice, Jewish sacrifice raised to the superlative degree; He is no successor of the

priests of Judaism, nor did He come to continue in some eminent way the old ritual and order; He came as the Mediator of a new covenant, based upon an ideal sacrifice of moral excellence, in that "He offered himself without blemish unto God through the eternal Spirit," a sacrifice which abrogates, "takes away the first." This thought of the cessation of the Levitical sacrifices in favor of His ideal offering should not be surprising to you, for *it is implied clearly in this divinely-inspired Messianic Psalm*, in which He says, "Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein" (and these are just the things so characteristic of the law and "offered according to the law"); and then of His real purpose and of God's desire he says, "Lo, I am come to do thy will." *By such a sacrifice the old covenant and the old sacrifices are done away, and the new covenant established. By Him was the will of God perfectly accomplished, both in every department of His trying life and in His sacrificial death; even by Him, "who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."* "By which will of

God," perfectly accomplished by Christ, "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Our complete purification from the guilt of sin and our consecration to a life of obedience after the pattern of His own have been accomplished by the offering of Christ. For you know "that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, *even the blood of Christ.*" "Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service.*"

In verses 11-13 we have a carefully worked picture of the two kinds of high-priestly service, the old and the new, set side by side for purposes of contrast. The picture may well be called, as one has named it, "The Sacerdotal Drudge and the Priest upon the Throne." "And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet" (vs. 11-13). "*Every*" Levitical "*priest*" has the same monotonous experience,

standing as a trembling suppliant "*day by day*," going through with a well-nigh endless "ministering and offering" of "*oftentimes the same sacrifices*," over and over again, practically the same thing day after day, offering "sacrifices which can *never* take away sins." What a treadmill existence it is! what an endless, profitless task! *ever, ever, ever*—the same sacrifices which can *never, never, never* take away sins! But, in contrast to such a menial, disappointing, never-ending round of ceremonial service, think upon the unique, triumphant, completed sacrifice of the royal, priestly Son of God, who by one supreme offering of Himself without blemish unto God through the eternal Spirit, has provided for the removal both of the condemnation and the power of all sin forever; and now as a Conqueror has sat down royally to mediate "on the right hand of God," ever living "to make intercession for us"; He was victorious in His battle with sin, and now sits awaiting the full outcome of His conquest; He had indeed His cross, but now wears a crown. *Don't be distressed, then, about His shameful death, but learn to glory in it; for it was a part of His perfect obedience and was in the path that led to the throne! Let every one of us exult in every part of His victory! Let no one turn away with a hungry heart from Him or His sacrifice, or desire any more to feed upon Levitical ceremonies. He has made the ideal*

offering; God has accepted Him and it; yonder He sits at "the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet." Yonder throne He will never again leave for the cross, for *it will never again be necessary*. When He undertook the work of sacrifice, He deliberately and purposely counted the entire cost, made no failure of it in any respect, and cried in triumph on the cross, "It is finished." No more sacrifices are necessary. "*For by one offering he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified*" (v. 14).

How many people there are both in Protestant and Catholic churches who seem to have no keen appreciation of *the completeness of Christ's sacrificial work*, nor what it means to be "saved by grace"! people who by penance and tears are trying to add something to His completed work; people who seem to act as if so much religion on their part would offset so much sin! How often one hears it said with reference to this or that sinful indulgence "I guess I can do this to-night, I went to church last night"! Do you wonder that there is little joy in such a legal, pay-as-you-go idea of Christianity? It's Judaism through and through! It's of the letter that killeth! There's no spirit there that maketh alive! *But* when one gets some clear conception of the fact that "*once for all*," for all time, for all our necessities, by one supreme sacrifice of Himself, Christ

has forever put away sin, and is fully able to perfect forever all who accept Him; that He who once died for all now lives, seated by God Himself at the right hand of power, there as our Representative and ever to intercede for us, from there to watch the movements of history, helping the right to triumph and joining in all movements for the overthrow of evil, personally interested in and pleading for every one of us; when we realize that no works of ours can add an iota to the fullness of our pardon in Him, but that it is really and forever true that "There is now therefore no condemnation to those that are in Christ Jesus"; then the heart is overwhelmed with the thought of the manifold graces of God, the soul is filled with indescribable peace, and the life is gladly and continuously dedicated to the unending service of God. Those, who are trying to be saved by their own acts of righteousness, or who are trying to supplement by their own good deeds or by penances for sin the completed sacrifice of Christ, find life a burden and a bondage, with no assurance in the heart of full acceptance with Him; but those who see upon the throne Him who cried, "It is finished," find rest in their souls, and are set free "from dead works to serve the living God." The person under law serves in order that perchance he may be saved; the person under grace serves because he has been saved. The person under law serves

in order that God may forgive; the person under grace serves because God has forgiven. One works in order that he may become a son, the other works because he is a son. *And there is as much difference between the two ways of living as between slavery and liberty, a burden and a blessing, life and death.* May the Holy Spirit, interpreting to each one of you the promises of the Book and the provisions of His salvation, teach you joyously and confidently to say, "Now *are* we the sons of God. Nor do you need any other priest or any other sacrifice. Nor do you *need to repeat*, even in picture if you thus regard it, nor in reality as it is said to be, by any elevation of the Host the sacrifice of Christ, *done "once" and "once for all."* "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (v. 14); His blood cleanses from *all* sin, and through Him all that will may have *full* access to the Father *continually*. This, of course, is the goal of all sacrifice, and now that it is fully provided in Christ, we need no other offerings.

"Once for all, O sinner, receive it!
Once for all, O brother believe it!
Cling to the cross, the burden will fall;
Christ hath redeemed us, once for all."

Nor should this conclusion startle you Hebrew Christians, for surely as much as this is implied in the fortieth Psalm from which I have recently

quoted; moreover, in the divinely-inspired promises of the new covenant we have *the endorsement of God Himself* to our interpretation, for "The Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us: for after he hath said,

This is the covenant that I will make with them
After those days, saith the Lord;
I will put my laws on their heart,
And upon their mind also will I write them;
Then saith he
And their sins and their iniquities will
I remember no more.

Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (vs. 15-18). He is the Ideal Priest, ministering in the real Presence of God, pleading and presenting forever the merits of a perfect sacrifice, and introducing new relations between God and man, a covenant of full, free and final forgiveness of all sins. Such being His service and our full privileges, *we need no other priests nor sacrifices for sin*. "Let us therefore draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need."

Let us Draw Near and Hold Fast

Chapter X, verses 19-39.

NOW that we have examined more or less carefully chaps. 1—10, v. 18, which section forms the argumentative portion of Hebrews, it remains for us in the last two studies to consider in an outline way the *general thought of the rest of the book*, chaps. 10: 19—13: 25, which is *largely a section of alternating exhortations and warnings based directly upon the argument of the Epistle and suited to the peculiar privileges and perils of these Hebrew Christians, and to all Christians for their privileges and perils are more or less common to us all.* It has been abundantly set forth in the previous chapters of the book that Christianity is superior to Judaism both in its *agents* and in its *advantages*. The God who spoke so wondrously in days of old through prophets and priests, through laws and ceremonies given through angels and Moses and Aaron, to the Jews, is *the God of a progressive revelation, and has spoken again fully and finally unto us* who live in this last age *in His son, who*

is Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer, and King, the outshining of the Father's brightness, and the very impress of His substance; this Son is *infinitely superior to any and all angels*, whose nature and position are ever menial, while His person and position are royal, God having said to Him, "Thou art my Son," and again, "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thy enemies the footstool of thy feet"; the revelation given through Him is, therefore, superior to the word spoken through angels, i. e., Judaism and the Old Testament; and we should give the more earnest heed to it lest we drift away from it, for those who neglected the partial revelation of the past brought terrible consequences upon themselves, what, then, must be the penalty of those who turn away from the full revelation of the present, given through God's own Son, confirmed by the eye-witnesses, God Himself also adding His testimony, a revelation wondrously inaugurated and abundantly confirmed? The position of this Son is royal, for yonder He sits crowned with glory and honor; though He was for a time lower than angels, it was only for a time, that He might manifest God's ideal of man, that through suffering He might be perfected to be the Captain of man's salvation, that He might be thoroughly identified in brotherhood with those whom He came to save, that He might die and through death destroy the power

of death, that He might be in every way able to make propitiation for the sins of the people and become a faithful and merciful High Priest: this is the thought of the first two chapters of our Epistle.

In chapters 3 and 4, the second section of the book, it has been shown that *Jesus is greater than Moses*; Moses was only a servant and a part of a temporary dispensation, while Christ is a Son and the founder of all; through Moses were given promises of a physical rest in the land of Canaan upon the fulfillment of conditions of trust and of obedience, but the people of that day missed the proffered blessings because of their unbelief; through Christ are offered to us infinitely superior blessings, *a rest* of which Old Testament Sabbath and the Canaan-land into which Joshua led the descendants of the rebellious children of Israel were but shadows; let us see to it that we enter into that rest by fulfilling its plain conditions; for we cannot afford to play with the living, energetic, wondrously sharp and powerfully keen word of the all-knowing Judge; we need to be diligent and filled with the spirit of trust and obedience, lest we miss the privileges that are open before us and bring upon ourselves the penalty of neglect; but we must not let fear paralyze us, for we have a Great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who has passed through the heavens, a High Priest that is touched with

the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all respects as we yet without sin; through Him we can draw near with boldness to the throne of Grace and find grace and mercy to help us in time of need: this is the thought of the second section of our Epistle, chapters 3 and 4.

In the third section of Hebrews, chaps. 5—10, v. 18, *the superiority of this Great High Priest to Aaron and his successors* has been powerfully proved. Christ as a Priest, not only has all that was the glory of the Aaronic priesthood, human sympathy and divine appointment, which characteristics He has in a superior sense, but also as a Priest of the Melchizedek type He possesses many qualifications not possessed by the priests of Aaron; He is a royal Priest, King of Righteousness and King of Peace, His Priesthood being one of solitary dignity and grandeur, dependent not upon physical conditions or carnal ordinances, but upon His own inherent worth, without predecessors or successors. He has an intransmissible Priesthood, eternally connected with His Sonship, established by the unchangeable oath of God and as permanent as His unending life. Indeed, with unbounded human sympathy, with unquestionably a divine appointment, with absolute sinlessness of character, with eternity of existence, royally sitting at the right hand of God, "ever living to intercede for us," He is just the

High Priest that the human heart craves, "able to save to the uttermost those that draw near unto God through him." His ministration, being carried on in the realm of the heavenlies, in the sphere of the real and abiding, in the actual Presence of God, not in an earthly, perishable tabernacle of this world, is superior to the service of the Old Testament priests who minister in that which is but a copy of the eternal reality; and He is the Mediator of a better covenant based upon the better promises given through Jeremiah, promises of a new covenant which would be characterized by an internal inscription of God's law upon the heart, complete knowledge of and access to God on the part of all members of the covenant, and full and final forgiveness of sins; this promise of a new and superior covenant dooms the old. The work of the Old Testament high priest, moreover, upon the greatest day of the Jewish ritual is not to be compared with the ministration of the Great High Priest of Christianity; for he in a temporary, worldly tabernacle once a year, not without blood, was permitted symbolically to come into the Presence of God to accomplish an annual redemption for himself and his people from the ritualistic ignorances and ceremonial defilements of the past year; but Christ, entering once for all into the very Presence of God through the efficacy of His own blood, wrought out an eternal

redemption in the realm of the heart and life, setting us free from dead works to serve the living God, by offering Himself without blemish unto God through the eternal Spirit. The climax of His High-priestly work is seen in the ideal character of His sacrifice which was Himself; don't be distressed, therefore, over His shameful death, for through this very means purification of sins has been accomplished and the new covenant ratified, even as purification and ratification under the old covenant were accomplished by the shedding and sprinkling of blood. We may well glory in His death, which took place "once" of necessity in the accomplishment of His ideal sacrifice, but because of its significance and power took place "once only." Repetition of Old Testament sacrifices was an evidence of their insufficiency and of the endless drudgery of those ineffective high-priestly ministrations which never did or could deal thoroughly with sin; but the offering of Christ was "once for all," because He has actually put away sins forever, and now has sat down victoriously at the right hand of God, where He shall sit unto the end, able and willing to help all who will come to Him, giving complete forgiveness of all past sin and furnishing full and free access to God to all who will trust Him. No other priests or offerings for sin are necessary, because He has inaugurated the new covenant divinely predicted by

Jeremiah, of which God said, "Their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Upon the basis of such an argument and in view of the privileges and perils of these Hebrew Christians our author exhorts them: "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus, [by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and *having* a great priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and having our body washed with pure water, let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; not forsaking our own assembling together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting *one another*; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh" (vs. 19-25). When Christ made His supreme sacrifice upon Calvary, the great blue veil in the temple, which separated the outer tabernacle from the inner Holy of holies, was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, God Himself in the Person of His Son having torn the veil away and made it possible for all who will to have perfect access to and fellowship with Himself. What was the privilege of none but the high priest and that too only once a year, is now the privilege of each one

of us at any time through Christ. This way which He has opened for us is a "new" way in the sense that it has been recently made, and also in the sense that it will remain fresh and cannot grow old; it is a living way in that it consists of Christ Himself ("I am the way"), through fellowship with a living Person we have access; it is "through the veil, that is to say, his flesh"; as the Old Testament high priest was compelled to pass through the veil before he could come into the Holy of holies, so Christ had to pass through His experiences of human life upon earth with all of the trials and sufferings it involved, before He could enter as humanity's High Priest into the very Audience-chamber of God. Since now we have such great privileges, (a) boldness to enter into God's Presence by such a new and living way, as Christ's sacrifice has opened for us, and (b) such "a great priest over the house of God," such a powerful Friend at court "whither as a Forerunner Jesus entered for us," let us (1) "draw near with a true heart in fullness of faith," (2) "let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not," and (3) "let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." This is our author's three-fold exhortation.

(1) "*Let us draw near.*" But how? "With a true heart in fullness of faith," i. e., with a joyful, undivided heart; sincere in our singleness of purpose, confident in Christ and Christianity as

our only means of salvation; not in a spirit of fear or fearfulness, not in a hard legalistic and Judaistic manner, but in such a joyful, believing way as becomes those who have such privileges. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; and having our body washed with pure water." The reference of the first phrase is doubtless the same as is found in chap. 9:14, where the efficacy of Christ's offering to cleanse the conscience is shown; that is to say, draw near unto God, having in your hearts an appreciation of Christ's completed salvation by the appropriation of which to one's self the load of sin is removed, condemnation is gone, and we stand at peace in His righteousness: *draw near with confidence in what He has done and is*. "And having our body washed with pure water." Most commentators recognize in this clause a reference to Christian baptism, which is here contrasted with the bathing of the high priest on the day of atonement before he entered the Holy of holies. Baptism is the outward sign of the inward cleansing of the heart and conscience, the most important and primary fact being mentioned first, and the less important and consequent sign mentioned second. This writer is no ritualist, substituting rites of Christianity for rites in Judaism, but puts the essential fact first, i. e., the appropriation and application of Christ's work to the heart and life.

(2) "*Let us hold fast the confession.*" As Canon Westcott says, "The reference to baptism in the last clause furnishes a direct transition. The confession then publicly and gladly made must be firmly held." This Christian confession involved a looking forward in hope to perpetual fellowship with God under the new conditions of a restored kingdom, when we shall have put off the body of our humiliation for the body of His glory, and when the trials of time shall have worked out for us a more exceeding weight of glory. Let us not give up our Christian faith, and turn away to Judaism, or worldliness, or unbelief; but "let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised." *We can't afford to be half-hearted over the great facts of our faith and the privileges of our position. They are true and real, and worthy of our whole allegiance.* Because some of the things for which we hope have not yet been realized is no ground for discouragement or disloyalty, for He is faithful that promised. We can afford to take our stand upon the promises of God; no one of them shall ever fail. Men and women all down through the centuries, even amid many trials and troubles similar to if not more difficult to bear than our own, have trusted Him and His Word, and He never yet disappointed any one who kept trusting in Him. Let us hold fast our confession of hope, for He is faithful that promised.

(3) "*Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.*" No Christian can successfully live His Christian life in secret and apart from the Christian lives of others. The very basal principle of Christianity is mutual helpfulness; and the person who refuses to "consider others" is certain to lose whatever life he may appear to have; for one of the fundamental conditions of safety in maintaining what one already possesses, to say nothing of acquiring such an enthusiastic faith as our privileges demand, is service to others. Both the prosperity of the individual believer and of the church as a company of believers, depends much upon an open, glad, purposeful confession of faith, and a considerate stimulating "of one another to love and good works" by holding fast to the confession already made, and making much of the privileges of social worship, "not forsaking our own assembling together as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another." Any fire will soon be extinguished if the burning sticks of wood or lumps of coal are separated one from the other; only when they are kept together does the fire burn more and more brightly. It is not enough for believers to draw near unto God with calm confidence in their hearts; we are social beings, and need the stimulus of each other's songs, confessions and prayers. One reason why some of you have been growing cold in your

Christian enthusiasm, and have begun to hanker after the dead rites of Judaism, or fascinating forms of sin, is because you have not spent as much time as you might and should have spent in social worship, in the congregational services of God's people. No one is so strong in the faith as not to be helped by such meeting with the organized body of believers; while you, who are feeble in your intelligent conviction concerning the fullness and finality of God's revelation of Himself in Christ and the privileges of those who are in Him, and who have been losing your religious earnestness, and have been gradually forsaking these Christian assemblies, are *just the ones that need them most*. Specially is it desirable at this trying time, when the faith of many is being so severely tested, when the allurements of ritualism and worldliness are so keenly felt, when the dangers of apostacy are so real and its consequences so awful, when that day of dissolution predicted by the Lord is manifestly so near, that we should use all of the aids to faith and steadfastness that are within our grasp. *Nothing can help us more than* (a) an intelligent appreciation of the real privileges of access that are open to every one of us through the completed sacrificial work and the inestimable worth of God's Son Christ Jesus; (b) an enthusiastic whole-hearted, confident drawing near to God through Christ; (c) an unabashed, holding fast

to the confession already made, and (d) the use of the means of grace as they offer themselves to us in the Christian assemblies.

Particularly *just now* do we need to draw very close to Him, to hold fast a bold confession, and to meet often with each other for mutual helpfulness; for the times are severe, days of even greater peril are imminent, and apostacy at such a time will involve one in irretrievable disaster. "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." The sin which our author *unquestionably* has in mind as shown by the *remote* context, i. e., the general purpose of the whole book, and by the *immediate* context, the verses immediately before and after, by the illustration used to confirm the warning and by the analogy of Heb. 6: 4-6, is *purposeful and continuous apostacy from Christianity*. The word "sin" is in the present participle, which denotes not a single act of unbelief but a state or condition of unbelief. Those described are those who, after they have received a full and complete knowledge of the truth, turn away from Christ and continue, as he unquestionably feared they would continue, to turn away. For such "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins." Christ has made the only sacrifice that really and truly

goes to the root of the trouble, removes sin, cleanses the conscience, and actually accomplishes a full redemption, opening up the way to God. We must appreciate these privileges and make the most of them, for there is no other way by which to escape the natural and inevitable consequences of sin; if we reject Him and the blessed benefits He brings, *just as long as we continue in this state of willful apostacy we put ourselves beyond the possibility of forgiveness.* In that case "there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries" (vs. 26, 27). Not only do such persons deliberately continue to throw away all possibility of pardon, but they add tremendously to their own guilt by such sin, guilt which will bring its awful and inevitable punishment. Let every one of us be on our guard against any such apostacy.

"A man that hath set at naught Moses' law dieth without compassion on *the word of* two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall

judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (vs. 28-31). Surely to whom much is given of them will the more be required. *Privileges imply duties. We who live in this Christian age have superior privileges, and likewise have also greater perils.* In the olden time of partial revelation of God's will, if a man deliberately set himself against the revealed will of God, as against the Mosaic law for example, spurning its authority and disregarding its prohibitions, as for instance the injunction against idolatry, it is written in Deut. 17:6, "At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is to die be put to death." If such a penalty was inflicted in such a time for apostacy from Jehovah worship to idols, "of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy," who has turned away from the completed revelation of God in Christ Jesus; a revelation given not through such subordinate beings and mediators as prophets, angels, Moses, and Aaron, but given through God's own Son, and abundantly confirmed by the eye-witnesses of His words and works; a revelation which actually provides through the blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins and the introduction of the new covenant of grace? To turn away from such privileges and apostatize from such a covenant can only be adequately described as treading "under foot the Son of God," counting Him and

His work as absolutely worthless, even as hateful things to be willfully rebelled against and crushed beneath one's heels. It is really counting "the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, the blood which purified from sin, inaugurated the covenant and set one apart for service. It is nothing less than actually doing outrage to, insulting, blaspheming against the Holy Spirit through whom the grace of God is being manifested. *Such apostacy is rejecting alike the gracious operations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.* The revealed character of God makes it certain that such apostacy, if continued, must sooner or later bring terrible punishment. Holy love will compel some adequate recognition in penalty of such a crime. Whatever judgment comes to men will be commensurate with their character and opportunities. Because of what He is, He must not only punish the wicked, but also care for His own; judgment for all will be unquestionably just. For those who are in Christ, judgment will have no terrors; but for those who have separated themselves from Him, and are now living "without God and without hope in the world," it will be seen to be "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Such is our author's renewed warning against the awfulness of continuous apostacy from Christianity, this apostacy being regarded from the point of view of the judg-

ment and looked back upon as a completed thing.

But again our author, as in chaps. 2:5; 4:14, and 6:9, follows his passage of stern warning with thoughts calculated to stir up the memory of past faithfulness and to cheer on to renewed faith and steadfastness. "But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; partly, being made a gazing stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one" (vs. 32-34). Although the writer doubtless felt deep discouragement in his own heart about these Hebrew Christians, really and anxiously dreading lest they should turn from the faith, because of their lack of true appreciation of spiritual realities, because of not only their lack of progress but also their cooling of Christian enthusiasm and forsaking of the Christian assemblies; yet he will keep up a brave exterior, speak words of honest encouragement, and do all within his power to prevent the apostacy toward which their actions tend. *By appealing alternately to fear and hope he wishes to do his best to stimulate and help them. To this end the awfulness of apostacy (vs. 26-31), the memory*

of their own heroic past (vs. 32-39), the heroic career of men and women of faith in former times (chap. 11—12, v. 1) the stimulating example of Jesus (chap. 12, vs. 2-3), the uses of trials (vs. 5-13), and the heavy responsibility resting upon the privileged sharers in the new covenant (vs. 14-29), are one after another forcefully presented to them. Having already severely warned them in vs. 26-31 of chapter 10 of the fatality of willful and continuous apostacy, he tries to arouse them to heroic faith for the immediate and perilous present and the impending and still more trying future by appealing to Auld Lang Syne. Recall, O Hebrew Christians, how in those old times of pristine faith and endurance, with the enthusiasm of fresh love filling you and the joy of recent conversion in your souls, you passed bravely through most trying experiences; partly in that you yourselves were scornfully singled out as professing Christians and made the butt of jibes and the subject of afflictions; partly in that you manfully stood by and sympathized with those who were so treated. For in those awful days of persecution from your Jewish brethren and your unchristian neighbors, you not only were manifesting your sympathy with those who were in bonds (the old reading "on me in my bonds" is now rejected as inaccurate by all modern scholars); but you yourselves also cheerfully, yes even joyfully, endured the wasting of your own

material possessions, "knowing that ye have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one." The reason assigned for their calm confidence and patient endurance is variously read in different ancient texts. The King James' Version is "Knowing in yourselves" (i. e., in your hearts) "that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance"; whatever hardships and trials one may have here, the Christian knows in his heart that he already has in heaven a possession that is infinitely better than earthly possessions, one that cannot be taken away from him and that will abide forever. The reading of the English and American Revised versions is practically the same, omitting "in yourselves" and "in heaven," for which phrases there is not good authority; and the meaning is practically the same. Another reading, given in the margins of the various versions, and supported by various Greek manuscripts, is "knowing that you have your own selves for a better possession"; by which translation we have the beautiful and truthful thought that whatever is taken away from us of material or physical blessings, *character remains*: health may go, wealth may go, position may go, everything else may go; but the self-hood abides forever: *in it we have an inalienable possession*.

Having invested, therefore, already so much in the cause of Christianity, having in time past

witnessed so constantly and courageously for Christ, do not now go back upon your glorious past, and make it to have been all in vain. "Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward" (v. 35). Hold on to the end in your confession and you will not miss your reward, which will surely be great: *hold on to the end*. "For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise" (v. 36). The word that is translated "patience" would in many places in the New Testament be better translated "endurance" or "patient endurance," which is the force of the word here, the literal meaning being, "bearing up under." You will need in the midst of your present and future trials patient endurance, that, having done already in your past experiences the will of God, *you may receive all that is involved in the promise*, i. e., the present victory of faith amid your troubles, and the future inheritance, which will surely be given to those who hold fast their courageous confession unto the end. The end of trials and hardships *for any one of us is not very far away*; while faith and patient endurance have been the conditions of inheritance and the characteristics of the true people of God throughout all time. Even as Habakkuk said in His day, when the Chaldeans threatened to destroy everything, when oppression and wickedness seemed to be trium-

phant, and God's people were inclined to be discouraged and thoroughly despondent:

“For yet a very little while,
He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry.
But my righteous one shall live by faith:
And if he shrink back, my soul
hath no pleasure in him.”

But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul” (vs. 37-39). O Hebrew Christians, the end of all our trials cannot be far away! let us manifest that faith which is the life of the just, and avoid that apostacy which means death. We, surely, are such as shall have faith unto the end.

Again, we have in these verses a very striking illustration of *the freedom used by the New Testament writers in their quotations from the Old Testament*. In Habakkuk 2: 3 and 4, from which Heb. 10: 37 and 38 are quoted, we read, “[For the vision is yet for the appointed time, and it hasteth toward the end, and shall not lie:] though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, his soul is puffed up, it is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.” Our author quotes, as the New Testament writers generally quote, *from the Septuagint*, or Greek version of the Old Testament Scriptures, which was the version in common use in that day, even among Hebrews themselves,

most of whom spoke Aramaic and Greek, and did not understand the Hebrew. In quoting from the Greek translation these New Testament writers rarely took the trouble to attempt to correct the Greek version where it differed from the Hebrew, *but used it as they found it*. In the present case our author not only quotes the Greek version, which differs considerably from the original Hebrew, but he *actually transposes the last two clauses and adapts the quotation to suit his specific purpose*; which purpose is to illustrate the point that *the end at the most cannot be far away, and that patient endurance and faith are the great characteristics of God's true people*. It is evident from the way in which these inspired men handled Scripture that they regarded *the general sense of a passage as the important thing rather than the very words*. They understood that "the letter killeth while the spirit maketh alive." This fact, too, is made all the more emphatic when we recall the reverence that the Jews had for the very letter of Scripture, and the hide-bound conservatism and spirit of legalistic literalness which ruled that age and generation. To them *the sense of Scripture was Scripture*; theories of verbal inspiration and narrow, literal interpretations had not yet fastened themselves upon the church. That was an age of freedom of the Spirit and fullness of power; a time when the great living realities of God's

world and word took hold upon the hearts of men, and under the sway of living truth and a personal and present Christ through the Holy Spirit's manifestation, there was no supposed gain in letter worship nor in a narrow use of God's revelation. Life is always large; life gives liberty. And when the Christian Church shall again cease to haggle over texts and clauses, study God's revelation in the large by books and periods, and let its mighty realities sink deeply into the heart and life, one important condition of a return of power and blessing shall be realized. *It is for the purpose of helping along this larger view of Scripture in the minds of God's people, and stimulating interest in the study of God's Book as the reliable record of God's gradual and progressive revelation of Himself to men through men for purposes of redemption, that this series of studies has been given.* If, as a result of it, any one of you shall have been given a new view-point of the Bible, and specially a new enthusiasm and zeal for sane, systematic, historical study of Scripture, as well as helpful interpretations of the specific book of Hebrews, the author will feel forever repaid for his humble efforts.

Faith and Patient Endurance

Chapters XI—XIII.

IN this our eighteenth and last study in this series we shall be able only to touch upon a few points here and there in the last three chapters of Hebrews, the main purpose of our work from the first having been to present in the large the great argument of the Epistle, rather than to cover in detail every chapter and verse in the Letter. In view of the inestimable privileges of full access to God through Christ, which are now open to all his people, these Hebrew Christians and all of the professed followers of Jesus have been urgently exhorted to draw near unto God with a joyful, undivided heart, to hold fast the confession of faith and hope already made, and to consider one another to provoke unto love and good works, being specially careful not to forsake the public gatherings of Christians for mutual helpfulness and united worship (vs. 19-25). Unless these things take place, the probability is, specially in the case of these Hebrew Christians, that in the midst of such present and impending trials there will be an

almost irresistible tendency toward willful and continuous apostacy from the only means of true salvation that actually exists; such an apostacy would not only leave the sinner without any possibility of pardon for his past sins, but would greatly increase his condemnation (vs. 26-31). In the case of these Hebrew Christians the memory of an heroic past should ever be a strong stimulus to steadfastness in the future; for they in other days had not only joyfully endured many persecutions and trials directed against themselves, but had also shared in sympathy and experience with those who because of their Christian faith had been subjected to similar treatment. Having already suffered so much and invested so much in the cause of Christ, it would be a shame, and, moreover, a great loss of reward, now at length to give up the faith. The end of these trials cannot be a great way off anyhow. Still further we must at all times bear in mind that, as Habakkuk indicates, faith and patient endurance are necessary on the part of God's true people during all ages of the world, and He will not disappoint those who exercise them (vs. 32-39).

On account of our great privileges as Christians, on account of the peril and awfulness of apostacy, on account of the investment already made in Christianity, it must surely be that we shall manifest the true characteristics of the real

people of God, and be imitators of the grand men and women who in ages past have endured great trials and by the triumph of their faith have accomplished marvelous things. Already in chap. 6, vs. 11-20 it became apparent that it is only "through faith and patient endurance" that any one can ever "inherit the promises." *So it has always been and must ever be unto the end that the principle of faith, closely connected with which and flowing out of which is the power of patient endurance, is the striking feature of strength in the lives of God's saints everywhere.* "Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen" (chap. 11, v. 1). Faith deals essentially with the future and with invisible things; and is that power by which we become assured of our ultimate possession of these future things, and convinced of the reality of the unseen. Faith is the key to the noblest achievements of our glorious national history. "For therein the elders had witness borne to them" (v. 2). From the very beginning God's revelation has been of such a character as to draw out and develop in his people faith. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear" (v. 3). It is through faith that we get our fundamental view of creation and place a living God at the beginning of history; which

conviction is the basis of all other manifestations of faith with reference to His government of the world.

Even in the early days before the flood we have examples of the power of faith in the well-known cases of Abel and Enoch. "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh" (v. 4). Because of the spirit of faith manifested by Abel when he made his sacrifice, God bore witness to his righteousness by showing approval of his sacrifice; and, though Abel died centuries ago, his history is still known and he is a living witness to the achievements of faith. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well pleasing unto God: and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (vs. 5, 6). In the case of Enoch we see *how essential faith is to righteousness*: for Enoch was a man who walked with God, as seeing him who is invisible, a man pre-eminent for his faith to whom it was witnessed that he was well-pleasing unto God, who therefore took him

home to be with Himself forever. Faith was the secret of his pleasing God, for faith has as its object the very existence of God and the righteousness of his government, without a belief in which no one surely would make it his aim to please Him.

"By faith Noah, being warned *of God* concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (v. 7). Also in the days of the flood Noah became a powerful witness to the nature and achievements of faith; for he manifested a belief in the unseen, took warning from the message of God, and built the ark which saved his house; by which faith manifesting itself in intelligent action, he condemned the unbelief of his contemporaries and "entered into the inheritance which faith had brought him." The principle of faith, which we are now emphasizing and which you so much need to have control you in these trying times, is no new or surprising thing. *Faith both under Judaism and under Christianity is practically always the same in essence; it is a conviction of the reality of the unseen, and a calm confidence which leads one patiently to wait for that which has been promised and which has not yet arrived.* If you practice it and make your lives such as shall be characterized by it, you

become indeed and in truth the successors of the greatest Jewish heroes. The life of Abraham, the boasted Father of our Jewish nation, and the one through whom God intends to bless the world, was *full of remarkable instances of the triumph of faith*. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out into a place, which he was to receive for an inheritance, and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted him faithful who had promised: wherefore also there sprang of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars in heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is by the sea shore innumerable" (vs. 8-12). In leaving Ur of Chaldee with all of its privileges and associations, and in going out at the call of God into an unknown land and to an unknown experience, sojourning in transient tents, Abraham manifested the power of faith to lead one to self-denial of the present and visible and to patient waiting for the future and invisible, with absolute confidence in the greatness and graciousness of God's purposes, he felt sure that his faith would not go unrewarded and

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looked forward with assurance to a settled residence in the Promised Land, typical of his eternal home in God's own city, in a place not like a tent with no foundation or architecture but in a city built for permanent occupation by its divine architect God. This same absolute confidence in the purposes and promises of God he communicated to his wife Sarah, who, though at first unbelieving, became convinced of God's faithfulness, and was given power to become the mother of Isaac and through him of a multitude of men.

The faith of these saints was not dependent upon nor centered in present material blessings, but they looked forward in hope to the future and and thirsted for spiritual realities. Such faith as theirs is just the faith that you also need. "These all died in faith" (i. e., supported and inspired by faith), "not having received the promises" (i. e., not having entered into the actual realization of the things promised), "but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (i. e., having seen and welcomed them, and recognized that the fulfillment was yet in the future). "For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return" (i. e., if they had not had

firm faith in the reality of the unseen, and if their own native land had not lost its hold upon them, they could easily have returned to their earthly homes). "But now" (as the case now is) "they desire a better *country*, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (i. e., though they had not yet realized their hopes, their desire remained fresh, and because they showed such a disposition, God recognized them as His own true children, by preparing for them an abiding place in his eternal city). O Hebrew Christians, and all followers of Christ, if you really desire to be "righteous" like Cain, "well-pleasing unto God" like Enoch, an "heir of righteousness" like Noah, an inspiration and leader of multitudes like Abraham, *you must be willing to pay the price of such position*, and become imitators of those who through faith and patient endurance inherit the promises.

What an *inspiring example* of faith we have in Abraham! "By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac" (in his own heart it was already an accomplished fact): "yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten son; *even he*, to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back" (vs. 17-19). In the case of Abraham's trial we

have an illustrious example of the triumph of faith. For he was even willing to offer up Isaac, who was the child of promise and who was the only apparent hope of the fulfillment of the larger promises, believing in his heart that God was able to raise him from the dead if necessary; and, as a matter of fact, Abraham did receive him back in a figure from death, because he was practically already dead, as good as dead; for he had been bound upon the altar and the father's hand had been raised to strike.

All through this patriarchal age we have examples of the power of faith. "By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau even concerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph; and worshiped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff" (vs. 20, 21). Both in the case of Isaac's blessing and that of Jacob it was through faith in the future that the younger son was preferred to the elder son. The incident referred to in the last clause of verse 21, "and worshiped, leaning upon the top of his staff," is given in Gen. 47: 31 in connection with an event previous to the blessing rather than in connection with it. The translation in our Bibles in Gen. 47: 31 is, "And Israel bowed himself upon the bed's head"; the word for bed and the word for staff (*mittah* and *matteh*) having been confused in the Greek translation. The incident indicates the life of faith which Jacob

lived: too feeble to rise he bows himself upon the head of the bed in an attitude of prayer. "By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones" (i. e., he manifested his confidence that God's promises about Canaan would surely be fulfilled) (v. 22).

As in the life of Abraham, the father of the faithful, *so also in the case of Moses*, the great deliverer from Egyptian bondage and the mediator of the covenant, we have many striking examples of the power of the principle of faith. "By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward" (vs. 23-26). Moses knew that God had called him to special service; to have refused to listen to God's call in order to retain his place at court would have been sin indeed. But Moses did not refuse to do the work to which God had appointed him, but bravely took it up and experienced in his own gladly-chosen path

of life *the reproach which comes to every God-sent messenger and God-obeying servant in this rebellious world*, even the reproach which in a climacteric degree came upon Jesus Christ. Moses looked away from the pleasures of the present with absolute confidence in God's promises of the future. "By faith he forsook Egypt" (probably referring to the time of the Exodus), "not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the first born should not touch them" (vs. 27, 28). The magnificent faith of Moses was imitated by his contemporaries and by his successors. "By faith they" (Moses and his followers) "passed through the Red Sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians essaying to do were swallowed up. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days. By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace" (vs. 29-31). Such is the glorious record of the past, an inspirational list of heroes and heroines, who through the triumph of their faith amid tremendous difficulties and in spite of an unpromising present looked confidently forward in hope to the fulfillment of the promises.

Though this is only a partial list of the conquests of faith, *yet to give the whole story would*

not make the power nor the permanence of the principle more clear. Even Rahab, though a woman, a Gentile, and an outcast, was saved by her faith. "And what shall I say more? for the time will fail me, if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (i. e., a resurrection to eternal life, which is better than the resurrection to this life spoken of in the first half of the verse): "and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise, God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect"

(vs. 32-40). All of these heroes and heroines of faith, "of whom the world was not worthy" (i. e., who were worth more than the whole world, though as a matter of fact they lacked all earthly things), though they "had witness borne to them through their faith," God giving to them evidence of divine approval, "received not the promise" i. e. did not enter into the actual realization of it.

And this trial of their faith was *in accord with the will of God*, who in His far-reaching providence looked forward to the glorious end to be consummated centuries after they had lived and died. This glorious consummation, so long contemplated in the mind of God and to the fulfillment of which the old-time saints looked forward (for in some true sense Jesus could say, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad"; though what they saw they saw and understood but imperfectly, for again Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men desired to see the things which ye see and saw them not; and to hear the things which ye hear, and heard them not") has now actually begun to be fulfilled in our own day, "God having provided some better thing concerning us." With reference to us who live in this time of the great privileges of Christianity the Saviour may well say, "But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear"

(Matt. 13: 16). *To us God offers the fulfillment of our faith, without this long period of deferred hope.* These all died without entering into the realization of their hopes, because in the far-reaching plan of God He willed "that apart from us they should not be made perfect." From the first it has been the purpose of God to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1: 10) that in all things He may have the pre-eminence. The saints of the olden time, Christ not having yet come, could not be brought to perfection, to the complete enjoyment of their privileges, until our day. As Dr. Dale says, "Not merely while the saints of ancient times lived, were they waiting for the coming of Christ; even after their decease their bliss was imperfect. They rested in God; but the fullness of their spiritual bliss was not attained, until God became man, died for human sin, and established the kingdom of heaven. However obscure and mysterious this may be, it is certain from other parts of Scripture that even now those who are in Christ have not entered into the full inheritance of everlasting glory; and it is still true, though in a different sense, that 'without us' they are not to be 'made perfect.' The resurrection of the body is everywhere referred to as necessary to the perfection of the heavenly state. The '*spirits* of the just' are made perfect by the coming of Christ; but there is a perfection still before them which they will

not know until the whole Church is ready to enter into everlasting bliss." However great our trials and troubles may be, and however long we may have to wait until the full consummation of every one of our Christian hopes, our case does not begin to compare in severity with theirs. Their noble example should be a tremendous inspiration to us to stimulate us to faith and patient endurance.

Before we leave this glorious chapter and pass on to the appeal so closely connected with it in chapter 12, let us note an objection that is sometimes hurled by the scoffer against this list of heroes and heroines. It is said that here on "God's Roll of Honor" occur the names of certain men and women who if living to-day would not be able to go into decent society, such as Samson, "the bestial and brutal," Rahab, "the harlot," and David, "the licentious and murderous ruler." "The morality of the Bible," say these scoffers, "is so low as to allow such awful crimes, and to commend the perpetrators of such deeds." With reference to such criticisms of the Bible several things need to be said. In the first place the Bible does not claim to be the record of lives of *perfect* men and women, but is manifestly the record of the lives of very imperfect people, of men and women "of like passions with us" (Jas. 5:17); there is only one perfect Person, sinless in every respect, that appears in the

book, whose very sinlessness stands out in most striking contrast to the iniquity about Him. Again the Bible is the record of a *progressive Revelation*, and should not be judged by its *beginnings* but by its *outcome*. We should not refuse to listen to a noble man because when he was a boy he lived a reckless life. Maturity is the test, not immaturity. "By their *fruits* ye shall know them." We should test the morality of the Biblical revelation by the morality of the Sermon on the Mount and the ethics of Jesus and the New Testament. Again we should judge the deeds and lives of those old-time saints by the *light that they had and by the morality of that age rather than of ours*. God's gradual revelation is seen to be all the more marvelous when we recall the material with which He was compelled to work, and the height of truth finally reached. Moreover, though the Bible faithfully records the failings of its heroes and heroines, *it does not make light of sin nor commend iniquity*. In the story of Samson what a terrible picture is presented of the "binding, blinding, grinding" effect of sin! As for Rahab we have no evidence that she practiced harlotry after her contact with the truth, though the name of her old profession still clung to her. In the story of David what a vivid picture of the awful and inevitable consequences of sin in his own life of suffering and distress, in the repetition of his own crimes by the

members of his household, and in the going down of his kingdom before his very eyes! Everywhere and always the Bible stands for righteousness and opposed to sin. Now in this "Roll of Honor" the people that are commended are commended not *because* of their sin but *in spite of* their shortcomings. *They are commended for that in them which was commendable, i. e., their faith.* David was a man after God's heart, not because he never sinned but because with all his sin he showed true penitence and an earnest desire to learn and to do God's will. The principle and power of confidence in God amid untoward circumstances was what made these lives sublime; and because of that they deserve the place to which God has assigned them. *They must ever and inevitably shine as illustrious examples, not of what angels or sinlessly perfect people can do, but of what poor, weak, sinning sons of earth can accomplish when their lives are linked to God by strong faith.*

"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us" (chap. 12: 1). Since there have been in the glorious past such a multitude of men and women who have borne witness to the power of the principle of faith; who were willing if necessary to isolate themselves from

their fellows and to forego any enjoyment of the present and visible in favor of the future and spiritual; a multitude who in these trying times gather like a cloud of spectators around us who are in need of exercising the same faith and patient endurance; "let us also lay aside every weight" that would hinder or handicap us, this hankering after Judaism, this divided heart, uncertain in its convictions, "and the sin which doth so easily beset us," which wraps itself about us, clinging to our bodies and holding us back in our running; "and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." The Christian's life is like the running of a race; it requires energy and concentration; *it means business, not play*; it demands patient running; it is a God-given life and a God-appointed race course "set before us." All things that in any way tend to defeat us and keep us from winning the race should be gladly laid aside. Those who travel much in these modern days soon learn the disadvantage of carrying "excess baggage." It always means added expense, loss of time, and increase of trouble. Many Christians are trying to travel with a great lot of "excess baggage." Do they realize *how much it costs* them and *how much easier* it would be to travel without it? *Are you carrying any superfluous luggage, any excess baggage?*

"Let us also lay aside every weight, and the sin

which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls" (vs. 2, 3). However inspiring the thought of the great company of the heroes and heroines of faith gathered around us as witnesses may be, *our chief strength must come from Him*, Christ our Saviour, who sits at the right hand of power. We are to look away from our trials and troubles and all other distracting things "unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith," concentrating our thought and vision upon Him. His life all the way through was strong on account of faith in the reality of the future, the unseen, and the spiritual. His life is the perfect example for us, and He must be our constant source of strength. His faith made Him strong in endurance and did not fail of its reward; similar faith will do the same for us. He looked on beyond the present sorrow and shame to the joy of achievement and the glory of the Father. After His cross, His crown; for now He has finished His course and has "sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." So it will be with all those who have faith; they

will be strong to endure, and *after the cross will come the crown*. Fix your mind therefore upon "him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls."

"Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin: and ye have forgotten the exhortation which reasoneth with you as with sons,

My son, regard not lightly
the chastening of the Lord,
Nor faint when thou art
reproved of him.

For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,
And scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.

It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons: for what son is there whom *his* father chasteneth not? But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened *us* as seemed good to them; but he for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of his holiness. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, *even the fruit* of righteousness. Wherefore lift up the hands that

hang down, and the palsied knees; and make strait paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed" (vs. 4-13). However severe your persecutions have been thus far, they have not cost you your life, as was the case with your Master. Moreover you seem entirely to have forgotten the strengthening consolation which comes from Prov. 3: 11-12, in which passage God "reasoneth with you as with sons." The fundamental thought of this passage (given in verse 7, as correctly translated in the Revised Version) is, "It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father chasteneth not?" What a marvelous truth is this! All of the trials and troubles of every sort which come either directly or indirectly by God's providing or permitting providence to those who are united to Him by faith are for the purpose of chastening, or *training*, as the Greek word means. Life is a training school, and trials are our best teachers, aye, *God's teachers*. There is no "*if*" about it, as in the Old Version. What the inspired writer of Hebrews said was not, "If ye endure chastening God dealeth with you as with sons"; but a bold, bald, unqualified statement, "It is for chastening that ye endure: God dealeth with you as with sons." *There can be absolutely no uncertainty about it; it is for the purpose of training that you*

are called upon to endure; God is actually dealing with you on the basis of sonship. Sonship unquestionably implies training, discipline, chastening. Fatherhood means authority as well as love. If ye were without training, it would be a sign that you were not truly sons, but bastards for whom there could not be true parental care.

We should bear whatever persecutions and sufferings in body, mind or spirit may come to us in the spirit of sonship. There are *three possible attitudes toward these things open to every one of us*. Like the ancient Stoic, or some modern thinkers, we may make light of them, regard them as nothing, despise them, or even deny their very existence; but by doing this we miss many of the best lessons of life, weaken our own characters, lose sympathy with the sorrows and trials of God's people throughout the ages, deprive ourselves of fellowship with the sufferings of Christ, voluntarily step out of God's training-school in sonship, and fail to heed the inspired injunction:

"My son, regard not lightly
the chastening of the Lord."

Or, again, we may let these sorrows and troubles discourage us, dampening our Christian enthusiasm and dimming our vision of God; even as some of you Hebrew Christians have become disheartened and are inclined to turn away from

the faith. There is no profit of any kind in such a line of conduct as this. Fainting souls and drooping spirits will not be equal either to present trials nor coming woes. Something more heroic than this is necessary. *The third attitude, the one suggested in the inspired exhortation, is the only one that will accomplish God's purposes and lead you to the highest end, the actual attainment of that righteousness of character which involves eternal fellowship as sons with the Father. Remember at all times three things:* (1) That all of these trials are for training, as well corrected and educated children are trained; (2) it is your Heavenly Father, "the Father of spirits," who is directing the discipline; He can make no mistakes; shortsightedness or passion or selfishness, as is sometimes the case with human parents, can have no part here: surely, then, to His discipline we ought to be willingly and bravely submissive; (3) the end that He has always in view is "our profit," "peaceable fruit," "even the fruit of righteousness."

During the few moments that remain, a hasty outline will be given of the remainder of the letter, a few points of difficulty will be touched upon, and this series of studies in the Epistle to the Hebrews will be at an end. Verses 14-17 are an exhortation to peace with all men, and holiness of life, coupled with a stern warning against apostacy, apostacy which might be stimulated by

the spirit of contention or on account of fornication among them. This warning is specially emphasized by a reference to the well-known case of Esau who bartered away the privileges of his birthright for a mere pittance; and who, when later he discovered his mistake and wished to remedy it, found that it had forever passed from him. Such is always the danger of those who deliberately part with God-given opportunities. The rendering in the Old Version seems to say that he sought *for repentance* and could not find it; as if the door of sincere repentance had been shut against him. This, however, would seem to contradict the general trend of Scripture teaching that *whenever a man will* he may repent. The rendering of the American Revision gives a quite different thought: "For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing he was rejected; for he found no place for a change of mind *in his father*, though he sought it diligently with tears" (v. 17). The English Revised Version gives a still different thought: "For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance) though he sought it diligently with tears." According to this translation what Esau sought was not repentance, but the lost birthright. This is practically the meaning of the American Revision also, i. e., he found no place for a

change of mind *in his father* of such a character as to bring back to him the lost blessing. If we translate "He sought for repentance," even then the idea is of a repentance, or change of mind, that would be effective in restoring his forfeited privileges. Let these Hebrew Christians and all who share in the great blessings which come constantly from a Father's hand recognize that *there is a certain element of irrevocableness in human life. Yesterday will never come back again; lost opportunities do not return.* How prayerfully and carefully we should live in view of such a truth! We should see to it that we do not let slip these golden hours, but rather fill them with helpful words and works. The thoughtless word, the unkind deed, cannot be recalled. The arrow has sprung from the bow string; we cannot now recall it or stop its flight. How true are the words of Will Carleton, the poet:

"Boys flying kites haul in their white-winged birds,
But you can't do that when you're flying words.
Thoughts left unsaid may sometime fall back dead,
But God Himself can't kill 'em when they're said."

In verses 18-29 we have a passage of great beauty, vividness and power, in which the superiority of the new to the old covenant is strikingly set forth, and another warning against apostacy from such wonderful privileges as it brings is again given. The old covenant of law was a terrible

thing, well characterized by the awfulness which surrounded Mount Sinai and everything and everybody which approached it; the new covenant of grace is a thing of blessed privileges. "Ye are come not to the terribleness of the wilderness mountain; but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better *than that* of Abel." (The blood of Abel, "appealing to God, called for vengeance, and making itself heard in the heart of Cain, brought despair; but the blood of Christ pleads with God for forgiveness and speaks peace to man") (vs. 22-24). If those who neglected the old covenant "escaped not," surely we shall not escape still greater penalty if we turn away from this larger and this final revelation. God's message through Haggai, "Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven," indicates the doing away of the old, temporary, perishable covenant and the establishment of the new and eternal covenant of grace; "the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken

may remain" (v. 27). Let us cling, therefore, with great confidence to the privileges of the new covenant which we are now receiving and which will abide eternally, "a kingdom that cannot be shaken," for if we reject them we shall realize that our God is a consuming fire.

The closing chapter of Hebrews is a *miscellaneous collection of exhortations* such as we so often find at the end of the New Testament Epistles. Brotherly love (v. 1), hospitality (v. 2), active sympathy with the imprisoned (v. 3), honorable marriage relations (v. 4), freedom from avarice, and a Christian contentment and conscious sufficiency in God (v. 5, 6) are all earnestly commended. To remember the teaching and imitate the faith of their former teachers, some of whom have already passed away (v. 7), to remember that however much human teachers may come or go "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, *yea*, and forever" (v. 8), to be constantly on the guard against being carried away by various strange teachings, and to have the heart established by God's grace, which is the pledge of our security rather than by careful attention to various Mosaic distinctions about "meats" clean and unclean, is the excellent way to live (vs. 7-9).

In verses 10-16 we have again in the midst of these final and general exhortations a specific reference to the argument of the book and the

peculiar temptations to apostacy which surrounded these Hebrew Christians. Faithfulness to Christ and Christianity probably would mean excommunication from the synagogue and deprivation of the temple services; but what of that? Christians have privileges which are greater than any enjoyed even by the priests of the old covenant. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle" (v. 10). The bodies of the sin-offerings, whose blood was sprinkled by the high priests in the Holy of holies, were burned without the camp, as being too sacred to form, like other sacrifices, the food even of the holy priests; so Christ who "suffered without the gate" cannot be the source of life and strength to those who live under Judaism. When Christ was crucified outside the walls of the city, another striking analogy between the old covenant rites and the new covenant sacrifice was manifested. *Let us not wait, therefore, to be driven out of Judaism; but let us gladly and of our own accord go forth without the camp unto Him. In Him, our altar, we have all of the privileges that the heart craves; separated from our fellow-countrymen on account of our faith we may be, but through Him we may have fullest communion with God.* Through Christ let us offer up to God the sacrifice with which He is well pleased, i. e., a life of continual praise, open confession, doing good and contributing of

material things as occasion offers (vs. 15, 16). Don't forget to support generously and cheerfully those who guide you in spiritual things (v. 17). Pray for us for we are trying to live sincerely; and pray specially in order that we may be restored to you the sooner" (perhaps the author was ill or at least detained somehow contrary to his desire) (vs. 18, 19).

"Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep" (the risen, ascended, crowned Christ is the central figure of the book), "with the blood of an eternal covenant" (this thought has been largely developed), "even our Lord Jesus, make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever. Amen" (vs. 20, 21). However much our author may have been discouraged over the sad state of these tempted, half-hearted, ready-to-apostatize Hebrew Christians, he prays for them *earnestly and comprehensively, and I believe confidently*, that their lives may be that of mature, well-rounded Christians. In the midst of their many conflicts he prays for them to "the God of peace"; "who brought again the great shepherd of the sheep," distinguished as He is from all human teachers and spiritual shepherds dead (v. 7) or alive (v. 17) by virtue of His blood by which He has inaugurated the

new and eternal covenant. Our author prays that God may make them "perfect," a word which here suggests the repairing and putting into first-class condition that which has been out of order, as one would mend nets, or reset a broken limb (cf. 12:12-13). They have gotten sadly "out of order" spiritually; they are in a run-down condition; they need to be gotten into working trim. "Perfect in every good thing to do his will;" ready for courageous confession, for staunch faith, for patient endurance, for all of the Christian virtues mentioned above, for "every good thing to do his will." *Some Christian people are willing and ready to serve, if only they shall be allowed to designate the service. It is quite a different thing to be in trim "for every good thing to do his will."* What a wonderful prayer is this! Those that are capable of and liable to the most awful apostacy are likewise capable of, under God, the very highest spiritual achievements. What magnificent faith in the power of the God of Peace our author manifests! What confidence in the tremendous possibilities of redeemed men and women!

God "working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ to whom *be* the glory for ever and ever. Amen." But whatever man accomplishes or shall accomplish of abiding value is done only as God through Christ is working in and through us to do His will. Apart

from Him we can do nothing that is well-pleasing in His sight; we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

In verse 22 our author courteously apologizes for any seeming severity in his letter and also for the comparative brevity with which he has treated eternal and supernal themes. In verse 23 he sends a personal message about Timothy's release from prison, and expresses his own purpose and desire to visit them in company with Timothy. In verse 24 salutation is sent specially to the religious leaders and to all the Christians, together with a greeting from the Christian brethren who are from Italy; and with the benediction in verse 25 this grand Epistle comes to an end.

In conclusion let us sum up in a few words the great teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. In Christ Jesus, His Son, we have God's full and final revelation of Himself, and through Christ's worth and work we may all have constant and conscious communion with God, because of the free way of access opened by Him. Christianity is superior to Judaism both in its agent and its advantages, and is indeed the ideal religion, because it effectually deals with the fact of sin and brings worshiper and God whom he worships into actual, vital and abiding fellowship with each other. Let us, then, draw near unto God through Christ with confidence, hold fast the con-

fession of our faith, make use constantly of the appointed means of grace, and become imitators of the magnificent men and women of old who through faith and patient endurance entered into the realization of God's faithful promises. Let us each one beware of apostacy from such privileges as these, for nowhere else can full forgiveness of sin and free access to God be found. It is purely a question of "Either, or." United with Christ, and there is pardon, peace and power. Separated from Christ, and there is guilt, unrest and destruction. *Which course are you choosing?*

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